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March/April 2013

"To assess the performance of journalism...
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what is right, fair, and decent."

—from the founding editorial, 1961



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Opening Shot



The immigration debate is riven by strong emotion and partisan ideology that can obscure the relevant facts. Do undocumented immigrants take jobs from US citizens, or do they mostly take positions Americans don't want? Is there actually a deficit of so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) workers in the US, or do companies just prefer immigrant workers because they can pay them less? Would a pathway to citizenship for the roughly 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the US really encourage more illegal immigration? There have been record numbers of border-patrol officers and deportations in recent years. Has the aggressive, enforcement-based approach to US immigration policy damaged trust in the immigrant community, making comprehensive reform less likely? As the issues unfold in the coming months, both sides will make various claims about these and other important questions in an effort to influence policy. Let's all try to tease apart fact from fiction, rational argument from self-serving cant, in the hopes of liberty and justice for all. **CJR**

JOHN MOORE / GETTY IMAGES

Of thee I sing Immigrants listen to "The Star-Spangled Banner" during a naturalization ceremony on January 28 in Newark, NJ.



The middle distance

Defining *middle class* is the first step toward rebuilding it

In his State of the Union speech, President Obama said “our generation’s task” is to rebuild “a rising, thriving middle class.” But what *is* middle class in America? During last year’s campaign, Mitt Romney defined the middle class as anyone earning less than \$200,000 a year; that’s 96 percent of the country. Economists favor the middle income quintiles from the census, which situate the middle class between about \$20,000

and \$100,000. Sociologists often prefer to use people’s self-identification—if you say you’re middle class, you’re middle class. In 2011, the Occupy movement effectively dispensed with the middle class altogether, pitting the superrich against everyone else, “the 99 percent.”

With the exception of those rare moments when the definition itself becomes news—as it did last September when Romney made his below-\$200,000 remark—the media tend to use *middle class* without much qualification, as though everyone agrees on what it means.

The lack of a clear and evolved definition of middle class allows politicians and pundits to use the term—and its symbolic power—to add a gloss of everyman-legitimacy to their partisan agendas. Every election, then, is about helping the middle class and every candidate knows best how to do that.

Part of the problem is that the *idea* of the middle class, which took shape in the decades following World War II,

is so ingrained in the national psyche, inseparable from the American Dream. We see our country as a place where anyone who works hard can acquire a home, an education, a retirement, etc. President Obama’s Middle Class Task Force said as much in its 2010 report: “Middle-class families are defined more by their aspirations than their income.”

However you define it, though, it has become increasingly difficult for people to achieve the comfort and security of a middle-class lifestyle over the last 30 years, as well-paid jobs vanished, wages stagnated, and the cost of education and healthcare soared.

Under these circumstances, how does one address the complex problem of rebuilding the middle class? The debate emanating from Washington seems hopelessly polarized: Democrat orthodoxy (government essential) vs. Republican orthodoxy (government essentially useless). Journalists can help impose some discipline on this conversation by more explicitly defining *middle class*. They can also follow the lead of David Rohde, of Reuters.

Last year, Rohde traveled the country (and the world) to learn what’s being done to strengthen the middle class. What he found is that, beyond the Beltway, the conversation about the middle class is much more pragmatic, and that there are leaders on both sides of the political divide who understand that to solve the problems Washington argues about requires compromise and innovation—and contributions from both government and the private sector.

For instance, Rohde wrote about a government-funded startup incubator in Raleigh, NC, that, unlike its more famous brethren in Research Triangle Park, is combining the strengths of the public and private sectors to help poor and working-class citizens (who lack the skills to compete for high-tech jobs) start small businesses like flower shops and auto-repair garages. Up the road in Chapel Hill, Rohde explored the idea of public universities as engines of private-sector economic development, writing about the University of North Carolina’s effort to help its professors turn their research into independent companies.

With his proposals for a higher minimum wage, universal preschool, manufacturing R&D, and the like, President Obama has provided a framework for the discussion about how to rebuild the middle class. It’s up to journalists to scrutinize these ideas, find out who they would help and how, and tell us what they would actually mean for a clearly defined middle class. **CJR**

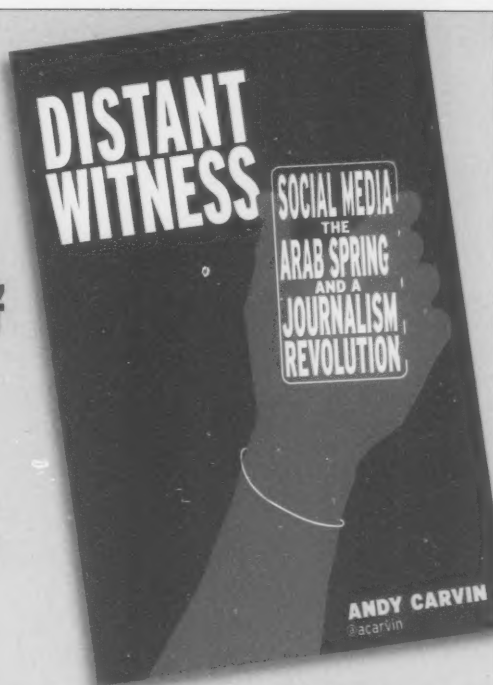
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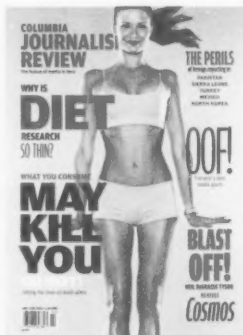
Helen Gallagher
Glenview, IL

Thanks, David H. Freedman. I enjoyed your article ("Survival of the Worst," *CJR*, January/February). You write, "Look at the preponderance of evidence, and apply common sense liberally." I would add that science/health writers should be research-literate, able to understand what is and is not a well-designed study.

The issue of blending personal experience with science and reporting on the combination, which he raised at the beginning of the article, is one I think is worthy of further conversation. Reporters, like bloggers, are sometimes trying to make sense of their own experience in light of "what science says." Being very careful about examining and explaining one's dual motives to "tell what's true for you" and "report what's true" seem essential to writing fairly about health and science.

Jess Williams
Pittsburgh, PA

Measurement errors and confounders usually cannot be avoided in population-based research, but they can be minimized. The scientists and students I know apply a lot of effort toward minimizing errors and implementing controls to track confounders in their studies. Freedman seems to overlook those efforts and creates an impression that medical scientists conduct research however way they want. Like any human endeavors, science is limited by methods currently available. The key is to stay critical when interpreting research findings and keep the limitations



'Reading Freedman's table-setting article and the four that followed was positively Orwellian.'

of their methodologies in mind. Journalists probably do not have time to go through this critical process, and discussion about the limitations of health studies may not be interesting to the general public, either. Maybe increasing the public's awareness of science and scientific methodologies can prevent readers from being misled.

Qing Peng
Ann Arbor, MI

Reading Freedman's table-setting article and the four pieces that followed it was a positively Orwellian experience, beginning with his statement that fully two-thirds of published scientific research findings are wrong. So the intrepid *CJR* team encounters a man at the border of a country who warns, "All the people in my country are wrong two-thirds of the time." Then it roams around that country with notebook

and camera without ever again addressing that warning and its obvious implications.

The lively science journalist for HuffPo is profiled but we never learn how—or whether—she successfully navigates the minefield of predominantly inaccurate scientific research. Media coverage of tainted food is condemned despite an acknowledgment of the lack of reliable scientific findings linking pathogens and food sources—two-thirds of which would, apparently, be wrong anyway. A photographer's project on hydrofracking is presented without a mention of the disputed research findings in that battlefield of science. The final step into the Twilight Zone came in Freedman's bio box, in which he admits that "he has been guilty of all the failures of health journalism he describes in this article." Really? REALLY? And was the article I just read a scene of his crimes? On that front, he helpfully advises: "Of course, I quote studies throughout this article to support my own assertions, including studies on the wrongness of other studies. Should these studies be trusted? Good luck in sorting that out! My advice: Look at the preponderance of evidence, and apply common sense liberally." And where would we, his readers, find the "evidence" by which we can sort out whether his "evidence" should be trusted? How will we know which one-third of it is correct? If common sense is so helpful, why bother with unreliable scientific research at all? But didn't people once argue that common sense proved the world was flat because we don't all fall off the planet? How is "common sense" different from the "conventional wisdom" we all know we should question because it is, demonstrably, so frequently wrong?

After reading all five articles, I was swept away by the frustration and futility of reading, much less writing,

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Zeitgeist

about scientific research at all. If that was the intended result, bravo! Mission accomplished.

Diana B. Henriques
Hoboken, NJ

Freedman's piece used a lot of words to say, in essence, "Don't believe anything you read when it comes to your health. But read as much as you can. That's the best hope you have." It's awkward common sense, but in offering it, Freedman is tarring with too broad a stroke. His passing mention of Gary Taubes, whose books I publish, alludes to his *New York Times Magazine* piece, which argued that perhaps fats aren't as bad for us as commonly assumed. But in two of Gary's books, *Good Calories, Bad Calories* (which contains more than 100 pages of source notes and bibliography combined) and *Why We Get Fat*, he simply follows the science, explaining why some studies seem more solid than others. Importantly, he also makes an explicit plea that the theory he favors be tested—properly and rigorously. As Freedman sees it, that might not bring us any more wisdom than all the other studies, be they double-blind or any other form. But to me, it sets Gary apart from many of those he is lumped in with in the article. Follow the science. That's the best we can do, and should be encouraged to do so.

Jonathan B. Segal
Vice president and senior editor
Alfred A. Knopf
New York, NY

What Freedman's article, most health/medical writing, and most research tends to ignore is the issue of heterogeneity. Practically all studies are based on averages, most often of a select group of patients. The findings may well apply to similar patients. But a significant portion of people are outliers, and the data simply does not apply well to them.

The CATIE trial of psychoactive drugs showed that while one class of drugs works best in one group of patients, that drug often did not work well in another group of patients, who responded better to another class of drugs.

Researchers, physicians, and people who write about medicine need to begin to grapple with these issues of

heterogeneity. It is the only way we are going to attain the promise of individualized medicine.

Bob Roehr
Washington, DC

Bitter taste

Helena Bottemiller's article ("Safe at the Plate," *CJR*, January/February) really resonated with my experience getting food-safety records. I have been struggling mightily with the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) FOIA office this last year, during which time, countless simple inquiries like "Is my FOIA request still open?" went unanswered. At least a dozen such emails and phone calls to CVM went unanswered in the last year, as I attempted to follow up every month or so.

While this lapse may have been due to the retirement of a sick employee, it doesn't excuse the CVM from fulfilling the requirements of the FOIA law. The CVM eventually did replace its FOIA officer, but the disturbing pattern of non-disclosure continues. My seven-month-old FOIA requests grow older by the day, and even simple inquiries into their status go unanswered. Thanks for raising awareness on this issue.

Tim Schwab
Washington, DC

Full disclosure

I was surprised, in the coverage of the passage of Obamacare, that so little was written about how things are done in other countries and how much leverage government-run healthcare has in reducing its costs. You dismiss this leverage in your editorial ("Obamacare: round two," *CJR*, January/February), saying it's not part of Obamacare, but it is part of Medicare. That basic journalistic question—How much does it really cost?—was never adequately answered for US citizens. Let me give you an example. I remember a news story that ran about 20 years ago in the *Globe and Mail*, about a Canadian woman who gave birth to a baby in a US hospital and received an itemized bill. Canadians like me were aghast at the outrageous overcharging the hospital did. A single maxi pad cost something like \$40. We all knew that was insane, and we wondered why US citizens paid those crazy prices. But

when I moved to the US and started getting medical bills, I saw that they were never itemized. American consumers have no idea what they're being charged, in detail, and I think that's why they accept the price-gouging that is probably the norm. The only reason we saw itemized bills in Canada was that our government-run insurance required them before it would pay. Shouldn't US journalists insist on that also? Comparing US costs for standard medical procedures to those in Canada, Britain, France, etc—or what the government agrees to pay for the same services in those countries—would be a great idea.

Carrie Buchanan
University Heights, OH

Depth of field

In his review of Alan Huffman's book on Tim Hetherington ("Unfinished business," *CJR*, January/February), Michael Meyer writes that "nearly half of Huffman's book is devoted to reconstructing Hetherington's final days in Libya." Seems like another attempt to cast in bronze an image of Tim as a "heroic war photographer" by a member of the fraternity of conflict correspondents. It's a self-referencing circle. The people making films or writing about Tim after his death only see him through the lens of war reporting, which Tim rejected completely. Tim created amazing images and projects on Creole architecture in Sierra Leone, neon-lit gas stations in the Arab Emirates, and post-2004 tsunami devastation and rebirth in Indonesia (among others). Has no one seen that work because they don't know Tim well enough, or is it ignored because it does not fit the stereotype of the photographer "with a British accent plucked from a Graham Greene novel"?

As much as I hope Tim's work is disseminated further and his talents exposed to the world, I fear the coming attention will be focused on a retrograde trajectory from the one Tim was pursuing.

Christopher Wise
Bangkok, Thailand

Correction

We neglected to include the credit for our January/February cover image on our Table of Contents page. Here it is now: Adrianna Williams / Corbis. **CJR**

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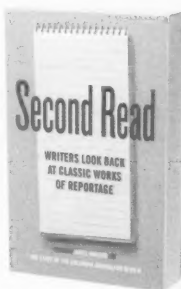
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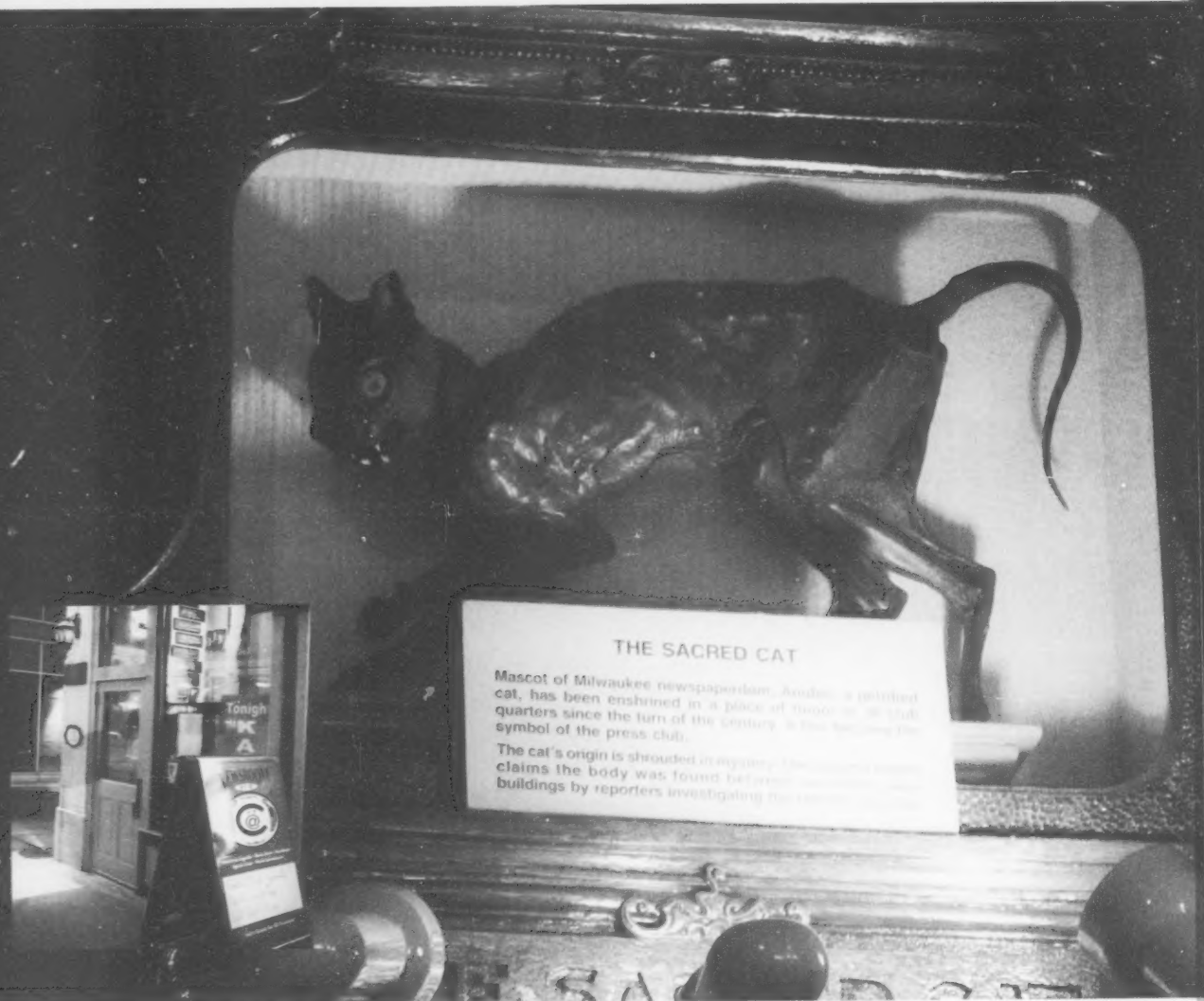


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Bryan, FDR, Cecil B. DeMille, Henry Cabot Lodge, Lillian Russell, Jessica Tandy, etc.

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Cat tale Anubis, the mummified cat pictured above, is the press club's mascot. In 1897, it was "borrowed" from the State Historical Society in Madison by two journalists, ostensibly for a cat show in Milwaukee. Anubis has watched over the pub ever since.

—Jim Nelson

Send recommendations for this feature to openbar@cjr.org.

Language Corner

Wether or not

A “bellwether” is an indication of what is to come (“Are rising home prices a bellwether for the economy?”) or a leader for others to follow (“Infosys is no longer a bellwether for the IT sector.”). Sometimes it’s spelled “bellweather,” perhaps because, as *Garner’s Modern American Usage* says, “like a weather-vane, it shows which way the wind blows.”

But “bellwether” has nothing to do with weather, regardless of how many people misspell it. Though it does have to do with bells.

A “wether” is a castrated sheep or goat, around whose neck a bell would be tied. Said animal would then lead its flock to or from pasture. Since it was no longer, um, intact, it

could be trusted to not “mess around” along the way.

A sci-fi book, *Bellwether*, uses the word as a verb to mean, among other things, to check classics out of libraries to make it look as if they’re in demand, thus saving them from the trash.

In the US, a “bellwether stock” is considered a leading indicator of a market segment. (In Britain, a “bellwether stock” is called a “barometer stock,” thus clouding the weather issue even more.) But *bellwether* also retains a woolly scent in some dictionary definitions of it as “a leader, esp. of a sheeplike crowd.”

In this case, be a sheep and follow the crowd that spells it “bellwether.”

—Merrill Perlman

Sree Tips

Social-media etiquette for journalists

Q:

What’s the etiquette about including your company name in your Twitter handle?

A:

Some news organizations force, or strongly encourage, employees to include a company identifier in their Twitter handles (if Wile E. Coyote were a journalist, his handle might be @WileeAcmeNews). My policy: If they don’t force you to do this, don’t do it on your own. You won’t be working for them forever, so why brand yourself that way? Moving to your new company, or setting out on your own, is easier with your own brand intact.

Sree Sreenivasan (@Sree), Columbia University’s first Chief Digital Officer, answers your social-media-etiquette questions. Send your queries via email sree@sree.net (subject line: CJR etiquette).

Hard Numbers

2.9

percentage of full-power commercial US TV stations in the US owned by Latinos

0.7

percentage of full-power commercial US TV stations owned by blacks of any nationality

0.5

percentage of full-power commercial US TV stations owned by Asians/Asian-Americans

27.2

percentage of interns at US daily newspapers who are minorities

19.3

percentage of applicants hired for their first full-time positions at daily newspapers who are minorities

\$0

wages paid to 189 Charlie Rose interns between March 14, 2006 and October 1, 2012

\$7.33

equivalent hourly wage awarded to those interns in the settlement of a lawsuit

\$7.25

New York state minimum hourly wage

Sources: FCC, ASNE, The New York Times

WHITENESS PROJECT



Frontiers Blinded by the white

In 2004, at a fundraising dinner for the antiracism group Facing History And Ourselves, the filmmaking team of Whitney Dow and Marco Williams were discussing their documentary *Two Towns of Jasper*, about the 1998 murder of a black man, James Byrd Jr., by three white men, in Jasper, TX. An 11-year-old girl asked Dow, who is white, what he had learned about his racial identity from making films with Williams, who is black. "I had this epiphany," Dow says. "My first thought was, 'I don't have a racial identity. I'm

white. Then it was like, 'Oh my god, I have the most powerful racial identity in the world.' Our whiteness is passive. Race in America is measured against whiteness."

Dow became interested in how to create what he calls a "non-oppositional piece about whiteness." Thus was born *The Whiteness Project*, a cross-platform examination of how white people experience their race and ethnicity in the US.

He started interviewing white people, asking simple questions: What are the benefits of being white? Do you ever take advantage of the fact that you are white? Etc. Dow wasn't sure where he was headed with it, but knew he didn't want to just make another documentary. The subject matter demanded a more generous and sophisticated frame than a linear documentary could provide.

In January, *The Whiteness Project* was among the winners of the POV Hackathon, which pairs filmmakers with developers to produce a transmedia

prototype of their project. Dow is using the prototype to try to raise money.

He plans to take a mobile studio across the country this summer, compiling a database of a thousand interviews with people from a broad range of socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds. He will edit these into a "long conversation," organized around the themes that emerge: guilt, obligation, fear, benefits, etc. The result, he hopes, will be the basis for a website, a photo book, and an installation for galleries, including a traveling kiosk where people can see the project.

Dow's goals are both modest and grand. "I want to create something that will give white people the chance to have the realization I had," he says. "It has made my life more complex and interesting." Beyond that, Dow says he hopes to "add an additional strand to the national conversation about race, in which whiteness is an active component, and race is not 'the other.'"

Title Search Digital executive producer

Hooshere Bezdikian is an executive producer and vice president of digital at People's Choice Awards. She parlayed her religious studies major and chemistry minor at the University of Virginia into a job as a Web producer at a startup in New York, then graduated to product management before becoming an executive producer at Time Inc. **Jay Woodruff** interviewed her in January.

How close did the People's Choice folks come to firing you once they realized they'd hired an executive producer who wasn't an executive producer of TV shows? Ha! They had the TV production under control and needed someone who could establish a real presence for them across all digital platforms.

So how'd you go from producing digital products to producing the TV show? It started with our live red-carpet arrivals show. We stream it online, which falls under my jurisdiction, and my responsibilities just sort of expanded from there. The skills are pretty transferable—project management, traffic cop, etc.



And since I'm technically savvy [she's managed digital technology for more than 12 years], the leap from digital to TV was less daunting than the other way around might be. The technical foundation is imperative.

So give us your Tweetable definition of a digital executive producer. I'm the nerd

disguised as the cool chick who gets people to do stuff.

How'd you get into this racket? When I graduated from college, I wanted nothing more than to pursue a career in music—I've been singing my whole life. But being a starving artist was simply not an option for me. So I landed a job at a startup, where I learned everything there was to know about the Internet at the time.

You're also an accomplished recording artist. What song comes closest to capturing the feeling of being an executive producer? Depends on the day! Sometimes it's "Stuck in the Middle," but once in a while it's "Girl on Fire."

The Way We Were 'Monumentally frightening'

In 1962, the year before the University of Alabama integrated, **Melvin Meyer** was the 20-year-old editor of the student newspaper, the *Crimson White*, and **Scott Henry "Hank" Black Jr.** was his managing editor. In September of that year, they published an editorial calling for the peaceful admission of a black student, James Meredith, to the University of Mississippi, and equal opportunity for blacks generally. Meyer, especially, faced threats and ostracism as a result. The next year, when James Hood and Vivian Malone became the first black students to enroll at Alabama, Black, who had succeeded Meyer as editor, published an editorial by Hood that called for fewer social protests by civil-rights activists and for blacks to focus on attaining education. Hood, who died in January of this year, left school as a result of the uproar that ensued. On the 50th anniversary of Alabama's integration, journalist **Dina Weinstein** interviewed Meyer, who is a Sufi teacher in San Francisco, and Black, who is a medical editor at University of Alabama Health Systems, about their experiences. Here are some excerpts:

Melvin Meyer We were not using the newspaper as a political vehicle. Then we published "A Bell Rang" [the pro-integration editorial], and all hell broke loose.

Hank Black As we huddled together in the aftermath, we realized there were threats coming. The university was upset about the stridency, the unilateral sense of the editorial.

Meyer We thought [the threats] were a joke. We were young; we thought everything was kind of funny. We got a lot of hate mail, and we published it to make fun of the grammar, because they were uneducated people. We published them with a lot of 'sic' for our own snobbishness.... When the Klan burned the cross on my



Crimson pride Meyer, left, and Black spent years processing their experiences at the University of Alabama.

[Jewish] fraternity lawn, I wasn't even there. The university hired guards to protect me, or spy on me, after that.

Black Mel was frustrated. He realized he was in shackles. The university didn't want him to cause any trouble that would raise the specter of violence when the university was integrated.

Meyer We had to drive to Birmingham every week to print the newspaper. The university got the printer to notify them if there were any articles that were possibly incendiary.... I didn't see myself as an activist. I was an outsider. Being a Jew at the University of Alabama in 1963 made you different and suspect.

Probably the biggest way the experience affected me was in the deepening of my heart's feeling nature, and thus finding deeper empathy and relationship with people whom I had never thought too much about before.... The experience of expanding my interest and empathy continued. The outer identity as a social-justice figure quickly gave way to the role of student of philosophy and comparative religion, and from there into absorption in mysticism, the continual longing for the Beloved and the union in the Beloved, and then deeper study and discipleship with a Sufi Master.

Black My year [as editor] was as monumentally frightening, but also as important to the university, as I could have imagined. I was terrified about how to handle the responsibilities of editorship during the days of [Governor George C. Wallace's] Schoolhouse Door Stand. It made me realize that very few people understand what to do in moments of crisis and historic change, but that somehow, someday we just have to jump in and do what we can and not flay ourselves about hesitation and procrastination—and cowardice, even.

I always was the beneficiary of some gravitas due to my participation in and perspective on the integration, but up until the past few years I did not value it as much as I do now. I accept that I played a small part in the burning issues of my youth and do not minimize it. As scared as I was, I at least accepted the task and completed it; that acceptance was a significant part of my life's work.



Unsuspecting Meyer, right, says he thought the threats were a joke.

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The Conversation Class warriors

In 1996, **Sherry Linkon** and **John Russo** led the effort to create the Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown State University in Ohio. Youngstown is a former steel town that became a case study for the effects of deindustrialization in the 1970s and '80s, and the center was the first academic program in the US to focus on work and class. Its mission was "to increase awareness of and respect for working-class life and culture through education, the arts, media, and research." Over the next 16 years, the husband-and-wife team and their colleagues helped shape the emerging public conversation about class and economic inequality in America, often working with journalists who were trying to make sense of shifting economic fault lines.

Then, last year, Linkon accepted a job at Georgetown University, Russo retired, and Youngstown State announced that it would not continue to fund the center. **CJR's Brent Cunningham** spoke to them in January about class in America.

How has the understanding of social class changed since 1996?

Russo When we started the center, it was right in the middle of the era of multiculturalism and identity politics, and while there was that trinity—race, class, and gender—relatively little attention was being given to class. And when class was talked about, it was still largely in the context of the old white, industrial working class. This also was a time of deindustrialization and disinvestment and technological change that resulted in a lot of downward mobility, and undermined the traditional definitions of middle class and working class. A lot of people who thought they were middle class were starting to understand that what that meant was to be one job away from poverty.

Despite this class confusion among academics and journalists, Sherry and I focused on how the General Social Survey, the longitudinal study that's been done for many years, kept showing that 45 percent of Americans thought of themselves as working class. We started talking about the intersections of race, class, and gender. And we wanted to talk about working-class life and culture, not just politics—which had been the dominant way that journalists talked about it.

Linkon We helped provide a framework, a vocabulary, for people to talk more about class in the public discourse. Part of that involved helping people understand that white people don't

ASAF HANUKA

RIP Out with a bang

For 25 years, **LA Youth**, a nonprofit newspaper written by and for teens in and around Los Angeles, helped kids learn to think critically and write with discipline and authority about their lives and the wider world. In January, it published its last issue, a casualty of the economic downturn and consequent chill in the philanthropic world. The final issue included a conversation between co-managing editors **Mike Fricano** and **Amanda Riddle** and some of the paper's dozens of teen writers about what it means to be poor. The conversation grew out of a survey LA Youth ran last fall in which many of the respondents reported fundamental financial struggles—like paying rent or buying food—but few considered themselves poor. Here are some excerpts from the conversation:

Shivani Patel, 17, Whitney HS (Cerritos): I thought [my family would] more or less be able to get me through college. But that's not the case. But I would never consider myself poor. I thought poor was your house is small and broken down; you have problems paying for stuff; you have problems getting Internet. As I've grown older, I realize that there are many versions of poor, even if you look well off on the outside.



Daisy Villegas, 17, Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies: I know for a fact that I am [poor], and I can't talk about it ever. My mom is a single parent. I feel now that I pressured my mom to [let] me go to private school because that's where all my friends were going, and later, when she said she couldn't do it anymore, I understood. There is that huge stigma that you can't talk about being poor because it's looked down upon. Even some of my friends, they associate being poor with being ghetto and uneducated.

Jacqueline Uy, 15, Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies: I think being poor means you have to make a choice

SYDNEY LI/COURTESY L.A. YOUTH

all have the same kinds and qualities of privilege. Some white people have less opportunity and less power because they're working class. Just because someone is white, or even a white man, doesn't mean he's part of the ruling class. And some of it involved helping people understand the diversity of the working class—in terms of race and gender, but also in terms of region, religion, and sexuality.

Where is this conversation going next?

Russo The declining standard of living is still a major story, and how that plays into the American Dream. There are really two American Dreams. There is the dream that LeBron James has. It's very meritocratic. He's the best basketball player on the planet; he's done very well. The American Dream works for him. But the other American Dream is for people who believe if you work hard and do the right things, you are going to do better for the next generation. That American Dream is dead, or dying. The challenge for journalists is to understand the relationship of the American Dream to the American consciousness, and the glue that holds the society together.

Linkon There's going to be a long-term shift in American culture because inequality is growing. We saw more attention to that in the aftermath of the election last year—what people are looking for and what their expectations are might be changing. And a lot of it was framed in terms of race, when really it might be more about class.

One of the questions that people need to be asking over the next 10 to 20 years is how our underlying assumptions, our politics, our practices change, as we adjust to the idea that America is increasingly a country that is defined by inequality, not by the possibility of equality.

between education or graduating high school and getting a job immediately.

Miguel Molina, 18, East Los Angeles College: I was struggling to figure out why my parents didn't have that much money. During the 12th grade, I moved in with my aunt and uncle and saw everything they had, and I'm like, "Why couldn't my parents do it as well? Why couldn't they make their own business like my aunt and uncle did?" I felt frustration about them not being able to provide the same life that my cousins have, because their life seemed much easier than my life. My aunt and uncle get to go see their games when my cousins play. My dad...always had to work on Saturday. I guess it also tends to do with the age of my aunt and uncle when they got married. They got married at age 25. They already had this mentality of what they were going to do and this plan ahead of them. My mom got pregnant at a young age, and my dad didn't get to get an education.

Chris Villalta, 16, S.E.A. North Hills: My mom's a nurse. I'm always at the bank whenever my mom goes. And I'll see the saving account and it's \$100. I never thought of me being poor. Thinking about it right now, it's kind of bad because we recently lost the house. There's a buyer that's giving us a year there, but if he wants, he can kick us out, and we're hoping that he doesn't.

The Lower Case

Man charged in electrocutions

San Jose Mercury News, 10/27/12

Violent Video Game Makers Rally to Fend Off Regulation

The New York Times, 1/12/13

Burning Fuel Particles Do More Damage To Climate Than Thought, Study Says

The New York Times, 1/15/13

Three charged in melee at Friendly High School

The Washington Post, 1/23/13

Mexico to reconsider joint policies with U.S. amid new state marijuana laws

The Washington Times, 11/8/12

Pot Clinic Bans Violate State Law, Calif. High Court Told

New York Law Journal, 2/5/13

Female Senator Makes History With New Position

The Huffington Post, 12/19/12

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Aspiring line

Why a young lefty writer let a conservative brahmin
make a monkey out of him—over and over again

BY ERIC ALTERMAN

When William F. Buckley Jr. died in February 2008, I happened to be in another of the endless arguments with myself about whether to sue him. I knew it was probably a bad idea. But I was sick of letting him make me look (and feel) like an idiot.

In his dotage, Buckley, once the young firebrand who published *God and Man* at Yale at 26 and began *National Review* at 29, had become a beloved, almost cuddly figure in popular culture; a throwback to a period when apparently, grace, erudition, and civility ruled our public discourse. *The Washington Post* eulogized him as “urbane, charming, and erudite”; the Associated Press offered “good-natured,” “intelligent,” and “witty.” And in a show devoted to his memory, Charlie Rose announced, “We celebrate his ideas.”

Who says irony is dead? After all, these encomia, and many more just like them, were directed at a figure who originally came to the attention of much of the television-viewing public by replying to Gore Vidal on ABC News (during the 1968 Democratic Convention), “Now listen, you queer, you stop calling me a crypto-Nazi or I’ll sock you in the goddamn face.” Okay, so Vidal did call him a Nazi. But the love shown the man upon his demise failed to note that he had never gotten around to repudiating a series of political views that were well beyond the bounds of common decency.

Buckley remained, for instance, an anti-civil-rights white supremacist to the end. In August 1957, he authored an editorial in *National Review*, “Why the South Must Prevail,” citing the alleged “cultural superiority of white over Negro” and with it, the need for the South’s white population to “take such measures as are necessary to prevail, politically and culturally, in areas where [they do] not predominate numerically.” When Terry Gross asked him about the editorial on NPR 32 years later, he assessed it to be “absolutely correct.”

Nor, insofar as I am aware, did Buckley ever recant his enthusiasm for South Africa-style apartheid, which in 1961 he termed “that brilliantly conceived structure” that

helped “black Africans” avoid their apparently well-known “tend[ency] to revert to savagery.” Buckley never reconsidered his embrace of Joe McCarthy’s thuggish tactics, mocking instead what he termed “liberals’ fetishistic commitment to democracy.” Then there was his enthusiastic support for fascist dictators like Franco and Pinochet and, fueled by his fanatical anti-Communism, his calls for nuclear attacks on both China (1965) and North Vietnam (1968). The outrages continued through the ages. In 1986, he said “everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed in the upper forearm...and on the buttock.” According to *New York Times Book Review* editor Sam Tanenhaus, author of a forthcoming Buckley biography, he refused to consider David Brooks to be editor of *National Review* because he was Jewish (or, more precisely, not a “believing Christian”).

But polite society had long ceased to worry about views like these. In his final decades, Buckley was also a man who kept television discourse civil and conservatism (relatively) sane. He was the almost impossibly enviable fellow who wrote *Overdrive* (1983), excerpted in *The New Yorker*, in which he explained that he preferred a custom-fitted Mercedes to a plain old limousine, but could not recall whether it was more or less expensive. For all his reactionary political views, Buckley appeared strikingly ecumenical in his personal life. He skied in Gstaad with his superliberal friend John Kenneth Galbraith. He lunched regularly with the editor and publisher of *The New York Times*. Mike Kinsley, then America’s sharpest liberal pundit and on-again, off-again editor of the leftish flagship, *The New Republic*, was more than happy to serve as Buckley’s liberal sidekick on *Firing Line*.

Politics aside—and I do believe in putting politics aside in personal matters—I could not help but admire what beer commercials call the “gusto” of his lifestyle. To me, he was one of the last of the lions: the great literary and political figures of the ’50s and ’60s—Norman Mailer and Susan Sontag were others—who made the world their own but said quite



God and man on Park Avenue, 1967 William F. Buckley Jr. objected when the author labeled him 'a self-styled aristocrat.'

a few silly things on the way. Whatever he thought about this or that, the man knew how to live, and he created both a lifestyle and a persona, that, as a young political writer with both literary and intellectual ambitions, offered up a model, however unreachable, to which I might aspire.

The first time I laid eyes on Buckley in person was when he gave a paid lecture at Cornell during my freshman year there. The night before his speech, a bunch of lefties had gone around campus and turned all the "Buckley" signs into "Fuckley" signs. (It was 1978, and that's what passed for political protest.) Buckley spoke on behalf of a flat 15-percent income tax for everyone, I believe, but what made the evening memorable was when, during the question period, one of the lefties stood up, and with a quivering voice, said he wished to ask "one simple question: Mr. Buckley, have

you ever gone hungry?" Buckley replied, "Why, yes. My yacht experienced an unfortunate shortage of stuffed goose recently off Nassau in the Bahamas." Since I identified with the questioner politically in those days, I found myself feeling guilty for thinking that the punk had gotten what he deserved. But I learned a lesson: Humor always trumps self-righteousness, no matter how weak one's case.

I managed to stay out of Buckley's way for the next 13 years. I got a master's degree at Yale, but unlike some of my contemporaries there, I did not get invited to Buckley's estate in Sharon, CT, to swim naked in between martinis and harpsichord recitals (as the stories at the time went). But in 1990, shortly before returning to graduate school to get my doctorate at Stanford, I authored an article in *The Nation* in which I—mistakenly, I now think—defended

Patrick Buchanan against the charge of anti-Semitism then being leveled in semi-hysterical tones by *New York Times* columnist (and former executive editor) A. M. Rosenthal. Not long after, Buckley devoted an entire issue of *National Review* to an essay on the topic of anti-Semitism and ended it by citing my argument as an implied model of good sense on the topic.

Naturally, I was pleased. I had been making a decidedly meager living as a lefty freelance writer—the future prospects of which had sent me back to graduate school—and here I was being cited as an authority on a big topic by a big man in a big way. The “old” right was paying tribute to the “new” left. I imagined the phone call that would invite me on sailing trips in the Côte d’Azur with “Kenny G” (as I thought I might call Galbraith) and a princess or two. We’d all fly back on Buckley’s private plane in time to knock off a *Firing Line* before a midnight meal at ‘21.’ I wrote Buckley a thank-you note and that, dear reader, is where my troubles began.

Buckley published my letter without my permission in *National Review*. This drove me crazy. I had written (in confidence, I thought) that I had just been turned down for the job as *The Nation*’s Washington editor—something I really didn’t want people I knew to know. Gore Vidal had written a then-infamous, rather anti-Semitic essay in *The Nation*’s 125th anniversary issue, and I also told Buckley that I had, much to my chagrin, agreed more with Neocon sourpuss Norman Podhoretz’s attack on Vidal and *The Nation* than with *Nation* editor Victor Navasky’s defense of said article. I had told Navasky this at the time—but I didn’t want anyone thinking myself disloyal to the man who had helped to launch my career, and would become a close friend and frequent mentor (as well as the chairman of this magazine). Rather presumptuously, moreover, I saluted the “care and grace” Buckley brought to the topic of anti-Semitism.

I was shocked by the cavalier disregard with which Buckley felt free to treat what I understood, and certainly intended, to be private correspondence. I had never given Buckley permission to publish it, and having followed the arguments over “fair use” law that tortured J.D. Salinger’s biographers, I felt pretty sure he had no legal right to do so.

I complained; he apologized. End of story.... I wish.

It turns out that when Buckley decided to violate my privacy, he didn’t hold back. He republished my letter in the book version of the essay, too. When I complained again, he apologized again, blamed a printer’s error, and then published it *again* in the paperback version. He appeared to enjoy my outrage.

In 1992, I published a history of punditry, and Buckley, naturally, figured rather prominently in its pages. We had had a relatively pleasant interview, and I was awfully kind, all things considered. Two years later, he wrote me out of the blue to say that he had “sighed but accepted as inevitable the populist blather about my superordinate concern for skiers in Gstaad and yachtsmen in the Caribbean.” What bothered him was my description of him as a “self-styled aristocrat.” He said he would be “grateful if [I] would explain to [him] how [I] came upon that designation” since he had never referred to himself as such, adding, “(which incidentally,

‘I imagined the phone call that would invite me on sailing trips in the Côte d’Azur...’

aristocrats would never do).” Then came a particularly Buckley-esque afterthought: “Ah. Maybe that’s it! Because I have never called *myself* an aristocrat, I therefore take on that mannerism of an aristocrat—becoming one, to be sure, self-styled.” He asked how best to spot such a self-styled aristocrat. “Share your secrets. Be a redistributionist à outrance,” he begged before offering his “cordial regards.”

I’ll admit I was happy to hear from the old guy. I replied almost immediately, telling him that since it was Christmas eve, I imagined he was in Gstaad, “or better yet, some Caribbean island of which I have not even heard.” Dear reader, I fear I cannot help but admit that even after the previous episode of abuse, this letter was even more nakedly suck-upish (and naïve) than the previous one. I (pathetically) congratulated Buckley on the audaciousness of his reply to that moron about the stuffed goose 16 years earlier. I only half-jokingly suggested that the guilt I hoped he felt over his mistreatment of me three years earlier would have garnered me at least an invitation to be a substitute liberal on *Firing Line* (visions of Galbraithdom dancing in my head). Then I got into real trouble: Responding to his “self-styled aristocrat” inquiry, I compared Buckley to the “vulgar rich among my friends’ parents and my parents’ friends” in suburban Westchester. I did not mean to say they were particularly vulgar as rich people go, just that they were unlikely to call *themselves* “the vulgar rich.” Similarly, I added, in a country where all aristocrats are by definition of the self-styled variety, no wonder Buckley didn’t think to call himself one. I admitted that this might constitute a minor victory for Buckley, but one that was “so slight” it was “beneath the quality of those to which [he had] become accustomed. I mean, after electing a malleable dolt like Ronald Reagan to the highest office in the land, getting a punk like me to withdraw an adjective must seem an awful anticlimax.”

In his reply, Buckley disputed my memory, insisting that he didn’t even know what stuffed goose tasted like. (He apparently forgot that he had been joking...) He advised me that my modifiers had been misplaced. It was not, he noted, Mr. Reagan who had turned out to be “malleable, but the Soviet Union.” Finally, he said, “The victory I have won may be slight in your eyes, but inasmuch as it is the only victory I set out to win,” he was pleased. He added that my “capitulation on this modest point is welcome.”

The sailing invites remained unsent. What I got instead was a furious phone call from my mom, saying how hurt she was that I had insulted her friends in a national magazine. I took a few moments to collect myself before figuring out what had happened. The SOB had done it again—published

my private correspondence without bothering to ask permission. I was furious. Remember, I am a Jewish boy, taught to make my parents proud. The idea of hurting my mother in a public way was intensely painful to me. I immediately wrote Buckley of his inexcusable violation of the code between gentlemen. He wrote back, explaining that he "routinely" published the letters he received, and so he believed the onus was on the writer to be aware of this and to act accordingly. That's it—no apology, no nothing. I wrote back that I found his cavalier treatment of my right to privacy to be an affront to "common decency," and given that he had now behaved thoughtlessly three times, he was clearly a hopeless case. I closed: "Mr. Buckley, you are not, after all, a gentleman. When your number comes up, and your supplicants are fawning over your alleged virtues, as they have done for your racist and anti-Semitic comrade, Richard Nixon, I will do the my best to remind the larger public of the truth," and this time, gave him permission to print the letter.

Which he did.

Twice.

The first time was in *National Review*. The second was in what would turn out to be the last book he published during his lifetime, called *Cancel Your Own Goddam Subscription: Notes and Asides From National Review* (Basic, 2007). Amazingly, he again included the letter that so upset my mom, which was why I was thinking about suing him. Alas, he died a few months after its October publication.

This infuriated me more than I can say, but even if Buckley hadn't died, I couldn't be sure I could win a suit or that I could afford one if I didn't. I did believe I had the law on my side. Buckley's violation of the rights to my letters had vastly exceeded "fair use" laws. I deserved retribution and looked forward to throwing a big party with (a part, I hoped, of) the cash settlement that might go along with it.

But here's the thing: Writers make a living based on a calculation in which one's genius must be at least proportional to one's reputation for being a pain in the ass. Being good at what you do is only part of the job; a second, no-less important qualification, at least in the days when I was learning the trade, is that one prove oneself "clubbable," to use an extremely old-fashioned term. One needed to know how to go to expensive lunches and fancy cocktail parties and not cause too much trouble outside of one's work (unless like, say, Christopher Hitchens or P.J. O'Rourke, "trouble" was your thing). I did not mind garnering a reputation for being "difficult" about trying to protect what I understood to be the quality and integrity of my writing; indeed, I suppose I cultivated one. But at the same time I was careful not to threaten my clubbability in matters social and personal.

I had had a couple of occasions to confront Buckley. One, ironically, was on a boat. *The Nation* sent me on a *National Review* cruise to Alaska in 1997 (the piece about my adventures was called "Heart of Whiteness"). The night I was scheduled to sit at the captain's table with Buckley, he did not show, preferring to have a private dinner with his sister. He dropped by to say hello, and that was that. Another evening, many months later, we exchanged a few pleasantries at a Peggy Siegal movie screening. Had I made a big deal of

Buckley's mistreatment of me at this or any similar occasion, it would not have mattered a whit whether I had been right or wrong; I would have developed a reputation for being a troublemaker in public, and the invitations would have dried up, along with writing assignments.

Then there was the "principle" of the matter. As it happens, I have foresworn all principles, except those relating to poker (I never bet when I'm sitting directly on the dealer's left). Most journalists I know hold to the principle that journalists should not sue other journalists for revealing information that someone, especially the journalist in question, would prefer to keep secret. I agree with this argument in the abstract. An expansive interpretation of the protections granted by the First Amendment are a cornerstone not only of my profession but also of my personal and political philosophy. Did the fact that Buckley was treating me like a contemptible schmuck and getting away with it outweigh my belief in unfettered freedom of speech? Now add the complication that Buckley himself had successfully sued Vidal way back when for calling him a Nazi on ABC News. He clearly believed in lawsuits that had the potential to stifle freedom of speech. Why did he deserve to benefit from a principle he obviously did not share himself?

Yet another wrinkle developed. I became friendly with the estimable Christopher Buckley, son of the great man. We were not spend-the-holidays-together friends; we were more the run-into-one-another-at parties-and-drink-too-much kind of friends. (These parties, one might correctly surmise, were often chez Hitchens, and I have little memory of the details.) I do remember that when Chris was the editor of *Forbes FYI*, he was good enough to send me off around the globe, and I don't even know if he ever published my articles.

The last time I saw Buckley père, at a party at Tina Brown's, he was clearly ailing. He was leaning on the bar, as then-tabloid gossip columnist Lloyd Grove regaled him with boasts of having banned Paris Hilton from his column. Buckley clearly did not know who Paris Hilton was, and did not really want to know, but did not want to appear rude. It was simultaneously sad and somewhat comical. When I said hello, he appeared glad to be interrupted and said, "Ah yes, the lefty Mr. Alterman. How goes the revolution?"

"Charming," you might say, and I'd be forced to agree. I walked away and let Grove get on with it. So there you have it. That was that. William Buckley repeatedly made a monkey of me whenever he felt the urge, and I let him. Not because it was the "right" thing to do, but because it served my purposes in my personal and professional ecosystem. Why was Buckley so celebrated by the journalistic and political establishment, despite the ugly politics he promoted? Because the man had style. Because being in his orbit looked like lots of fun. Because he knew how to live. Whether the content of his character justified any of this, well, that barely enters into the equation. Just ask the lefty Mr. Alterman... **CJR**

ERIC ALTERMAN is *The Nation's* media columnist, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, and a CUNY Distinguished Professor of English and Journalism at Brooklyn College. His most recent book is *The Cause: The Fight for American Liberalism From Franklin Roosevelt to Barack Obama* (Viking).

Fair share

How can we improve American media's coverage of race, class, and social mobility? Let's ask some of the brightest minds in the business.

A CONVERSATION HOSTED BY FARAI CHIDEYA

"It has come to the editor's attention that the *Herald-Leader* neglected to cover the civil rights movement. We regret the omission." ¶ Call it the ultimate umbrella apology, issued by the Lexington, KY, paper in 2004 (the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). While it might be tempting to mock the paper for its understatement, it certainly isn't the only outlet that managed to botch and then apologize for its coverage of race, wealth, and (in)equality. Yes, we in the media can have blind spots—often huge ones—when it comes to social change. To help identify them, we

set out to have a national conversation about what we're missing these days, and how media must adapt to cover an America that constantly reinvents itself.

Race, class, immigration, and social mobility were the issues we used to frame our discussion, conducted in January. Using the online conversation tool Branch, we virtually convened 18 members of the media and asked them to weigh in. (Please note that these are edited highlights; the online version has links to all articles discussed, and more.)

As context, this is both the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th of Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington. Many people don't know the March's full name: "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." We chose to address both economic issues and race/immigration, highlighting the current fault lines in our country and mediaverse. Among them:

We're in a period of accelerated change in the media industry. Big institutions are sharing audiences with scrappy upstarts and citizen journalists. How do you hold the media accountable when virtually anyone who chooses can have at least a small audience? And are there different standards for big or long-standing institutions versus new or smaller ones?

How do we make sense of race, immigration, and class when all of the issues intersect, but none is identical? What are key social changes we should be examining right now? What is the historical context in which we embed today's narratives? And how can we plan future coverage?

The 2012 election provides an additional layer of context for these conversations. Three numbers—the 1 percent, the 99 percent, and the 47 percent—were used in different ways to define how income, wealth, and taxation shape our society. The original Occupy Wall Street protests occurred from September through November 2011, but protests in municipalities such as Oakland ran well through the spring,

as presidential candidates accelerated their trot through the Swing States. By the time Mitt Romney's surreptitiously taped remarks about the 47 percent hit airwaves in September 2012, many Americans had heard a garbled debate about wealth that delivered more soundbites than facts. Governor Romney stated, "[T]here are 47 percent who are with [President Obama], who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims.... These are people who pay no income tax." For the record, two-thirds of the 47 percent work, with most of that subgroup paying payroll taxes. Many are retired. And not all, certainly, are Democrats. In fact, the Tea Party Twittersphere went curiously silent after the 47-percent remarks, perhaps indicating that the normally voluble cohort had little good to say.

If you dig deeper into the 1-percent-and-99-percent paradigm, that too has flaws. It's not until the 1 percent of the 1 percent (i.e., the .01 percent) that the income graph really shoots up. The average American income is about \$51,000. The 1-percent's average income is \$717,000. And the 1-percent-of-the-1-percent's average income is \$27 million. The discrepancies only increase if you compare wealth versus income. The issue also plays out in politics, since the 1-percent-of-the-1-percent are disproportionately represented among major donors. Overall, the divide between rich and poor is growing, social mobility is decreasing, and the average length of unemployment today is twice as long as it was during the last recession.

Turning to race and immigration, we can only take snapshots of a country in rapid evolution. Late last year, the US Census Bureau released a prediction that the country would become "majority-minority" in 2043, earlier than previous estimates. In 2012, the nation was 63 percent non-Hispanic white, 17 percent Hispanic (of any race or combination of races), 13 percent non-Hispanic black, about 5 percent

Look who's talking



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Asian-American, and about 1 percent Native American, plus some 2 percent who list themselves as multiracial. By 2060, the census predicts that the US will be 43 percent non-Hispanic white, 31 percent Hispanic (of any race), 15 percent non-Hispanic black, about 8 percent Asian-American, about 5 percent multiracial, and about 1 percent Native American.

As we put this issue of CJR to bed, the president and Congress were jockeying for position on immigration reform.

What seemed even a year ago like an issue to be avoided has new momentum. The GOP, after winning only 27 percent of the Hispanic vote in the presidential race (substantially worse than during the G. W. Bush years) is looking for new ways to prove its relevance to immigrants and demographics that care deeply about immigration. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush has come out early and strongly for immigration reform, perhaps presaging a 2016 presidential run.

In other news, some African-American civil rights advocates have stepped up second-term criticism of the president. On *Meet the Press* in January, NAACP chief Benjamin Jealous said, "Right now, when you look at joblessness in this country—the country is pretty much back to where it was when this president started. White people are doing a bit better. Black folks are doing a full point worse." Books like Pulitzer winner Eugene Robinson's *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America*, dig into whether a post-integration world has proven even less hospitable to a majority of African-Americans than the racially segregated but income-integrated communities that existed before the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968. Asian-American populations continue to grow in aggregate but also gain power within ethnic groups, be they Korean Americans in Los Angeles, Hmong in Wisconsin, or Chinese immigrants in New York. Native Americans continue to wrestle not only with issues like income and health, but also tribal sovereignty, the unique and contested space between tribal governments and federal authority.

As America becomes more diverse and complex, ethnically and economically, those of us who care about the news are still asking: What should we cover and how can we do it better? Perhaps as long as we ask that question, we can hold out hope that, working collectively, we will succeed.

Who gets taken care of when disaster strikes?

Farai Chideya Let's talk about the distribution of resources when it comes to helping those in need. I remember covering Katrina, walking through the flooded streets, talking to survivors, and traveling by helicopter with Lt. General Honoré, who took military command of New Orleans. The very fact that a US city had to go under military command shocked me. More recently, Sandy struck. [A *New York Times*] article about forgotten people in the Rockaways launches my first question: How well do we cover crises, or even chronic problems, fairly across regions, taking into account issues like race and income? On the one hand, the *Times* did an admirable job on this story. On the other, it took reporters, as well as responders, quite a while to focus on these forgotten people.

Many factors affect inequality of coverage. In New York after Sandy, there were gas shortages and transportation problems that made it harder to cover certain areas than others. A lot of the local micro-blogs that normally do good work on community issues were shut down because either they had no power or the people were picking up their own lives.

June Cross There are folks in Long Island, out in Coney Island, who still don't have power. In part, this is the Manhattan-centric nature of New York media. But also, Katrina devastated an entire city, and these outer areas in New York have historically been ignored. Likewise, Long Branch and areas of New Jersey. The media is capricious; the story moves slowly. Unless there is a paper of journo's as impacted as those who worked at *The Times-Picayune* in NOLA after Katrina, who are dedicated to following the minute developments of the stories unfolding in tedious tandem, it is difficult to hold the public's attention. If you have no Internet, it is extremely difficult to communicate with the outside

world. But Occupy Sandy has been doing an amazing job. The Occupy Sandy [information and volunteer coordination] hub does a better job than MSM.

Richard Prince Journalists should live in different parts of the circulation area, not just in the usual places that attract people of the journalists' social class.

June Cross This would be where citizen journalists could work with professional journalists.

David Beard It is incumbent on us to find ways that allow us to pursue hard news with characteristic vigor. Those ways could include special digital/print sections, linkage to events, or NGO partnerships to fund some science, conflict, investigative, arts reporting. In covering local news, we can be more creative in partnering with local bloggers, universities, and other media than we have been.

Jeff Yang I feel disgusted to even be saying this, but I think that the way that disasters are covered in the media—and ultimately, how they play out in larger society—often comes down to the colors of the corpses.

I personally heard uttered that Sandy was "white people's Katrina," which defined the context of both disasters: Sandy was discussed as an issue of decaying infrastructure and overwhelmed or underestimated civic planning. New York is a place where a lot of powerful white people live, and they were inconvenienced by Sandy. Their interests drove a disproportionate amount of the narrative.

Katrina [coverage], meanwhile, often seemed to focus on the victims as members of a savage underclass, speculating on the corruption or poor leadership of local black officials, the ignorance or willful resistance to authority of black residents, and false reports of violence. There was the infamous incident in which Caucasian flood victims were portrayed in one photo caption as "finding" supplies, while a black person was described in another as "looting" supplies.

As a consequence, I think there was broad overlooking of suffering during the early coverage of Sandy, as people debated solutions and causes—for example, the massive fires at Breezy Point weren't covered for hours. Thorough discussion of the antecedents of Katrina, and efforts to prevent future catastrophes, had to wait on days/weeks of disaster/poverty porn.

The only solution to this kind of coverage bias is diversity in establishment media, combined with a very different approach to partnerships between such media and citizen journalists/bloggers. It strikes me that in times of crisis, the news establishment [will] end up serving as a curatorial and factchecking filter for crowdsourced reporting, with its own reporting coming after the fact—in the window usually reserved for "news analysis."

Raju Nariseti The expectation that a *New York Times* or a *Wall Street Journal* or *Washington Post* can really be comprehensive—and, to borrow from the NYT, provide *all* the news that is fit to print—is a false expectation in 2013, given the state of our industry, the proliferation of content sources,

the growing promiscuity of once-loyal readers. Especially when it comes to covering large-scale events such as Sandy. There is a disconnect between what we think big media should do and what it can. The good news is that platforms and services such as Twitter are bringing news serendipity, immediacy, and breadth back into our lives and as a result, even if former traditional sources don't provide it, the scale of what we know is actually much better today than it was in the heydays of dominant media brands.

Farai Chideya I agree with what you say overall, Raju, but TV news divisions are not currently in the red. I think things really started to go bad in broadcast when acquiring companies began to expect entertainment-level profits from news.

Raju Narisetti Between YouTube, Now This News, HuffPostLive, and WSJLive, and you name it, technology has enabled a lot more replacements for big-media TV outlets. So I remain sanguine and hopeful, even if television news has to make entertainment-like profits.

Farai Chideya What Sandy news coverage stood out?

Latoya Peterson I scanned my social networks to figure out where people were and what was happening. Hours before I saw news coverage of how bad the flooding was, an acquaintance posted a picture of her abandoned apartment, with her toilet submerged. I watched friends in New York post pics on Instagram. And I waited for people to sign on to see if they were safe. I only read news reports about the aftermath—to get an idea of the broader scope, what happened in the Rockaways, what was going on with the trains. I loved the NYT [tick-tock on bringing the subways back into service]. But what stands out to me the most is that I looked to social networks for breaking news and major outlets for context.

Deanna Zandt I can't help but bring in how powerless the Internet really was in the wake of Sandy. When I went out canvassing the first weekend after the storm, the number of people that we met who didn't know there was an Occupy or other community relief center within walking distance of their houses was stunning (due to lack of power in general, let alone connectivity)...and then I'd come home and find a bunch of my nerdfolk online setting up websites where people could "help" one another. It was incredibly frustrating.

I'd made fun of things like low-power FM for a lot of years, until that weekend. CB radios and more "old" tech could be employed in incredibly powerful ways.

Coverage of class and social mobility

Farai Chideya According to a study published in *The Economist*, "Parental income is a better predictor of a child's future in America than in much of Europe, implying that social mobility is less powerful. Different groups of Americans have different levels of opportunity. Those born to the middle class have about an equal chance of moving up or down the income ladder, according to the Economic Mobility Project. But those born to black middle-class families are much more likely than

'The way that disasters are covered—and play out in larger society—often comes down to the colors of the corpses.'

their white counterparts to fall in rank. The children of the rich and poor, meanwhile, are less mobile than the middle class's. More than 40 percent of those Americans born in the bottom quintile remain stuck there as adults."

Vivek Wadhwa Sadly, social mobility is an issue in America and most places in the world. But for all of America's flaws, it is the most open and inclusive society on this planet.

Groups that help each other can rise. It starts with Mom and Dad encouraging and motivating children, and with communities coming together—people who have achieved success helping others behind them.

Farai Chideya There is a collapsing of the American middle class—not across the board, and not unfixable, but hysteresis (long-term unemployment) changes families and communities, [and] has public-health effects, too.

Vivek Wadhwa Wait till you learn what lies ahead—in this decade. We've watched the emergence of exponential companies like Facebook and Google. Billions were impacted, but only a few became wealthy. Now multiply this by 1,000 and look beyond social media—in fields such as robotics, artificial intelligence, computing, synthetic biology, 3D printing, medicine, and nanomaterials. We are going to transform entire industries, such as manufacturing. And we have the chance to solve humanity's grand challenges and eliminate poverty and hunger and create unlimited energy, improve health, and so on. We can figure out how to share this new prosperity, or we can create more Zuckerbergs. It is up to us. I am optimistic we will share.

Farai Chideya Where we put research dollars to solve medical and public-health problems will have a big impact on that. Cancer-research dollars have been flat in the public sector for years, despite some big advances in genomics and treatment. I still believe, with all the private innovators around, that government plays a key role in research.

Vivek Wadhwa Government funding for basic research is important and needed. But in this exponential era, entrepreneurs can do what only governments and big research labs could before—solve big problems.

Farai Chideya I'm a huge fan of public-private partnerships. Part of the reason for the sharp decline in African-American

employment was our reliance on public-sector jobs. They need to create alliances with industry.

Until the civil rights movement, black communities were far more income-mixed. Segregation caused clusterings of black families who created some amazing communities, like two my family come from—Westmoreland County, VA (farmers), and Turner Station, MD (urban mixed-income black community, with both wealthy and poor).

Vivek Wadhwa Farai, as long as the black community looks to others to help it—in whatever form—it won't get ahead. It has to unite and help itself.

Why does every discussion of uplifting the African-American community have to begin with government jobs or industry partnerships? Why not begin with new entrepreneurial ventures and mentorship?

Farai Chideya Black folks, in my experience, are very entrepreneurial. At one point in the past decade, black women had the highest rate of starting new businesses. But many don't scale easily (say, daycare operator), or fail, in part due to lack of experience and/or undercapitalization.

There are businesses that feed people, and then there are businesses that build wealth for employees and investors. The barriers to access certain private jobs and private capital will require new solutions. But we should not abandon the public sector. I am no fan of the way government works. I have said to several congresspeople, "I can't imagine going to a job every day where half of people want you to fail."

June Cross The press has missed the calcification of social mobility. In New York, nannies and home-healthcare services are predominantly West Indian or African immigrants. They work for minimum wage, often without overtime, and

until Obamacare kicks in next year, many won't have access to healthcare themselves. (And in the nine states that refuse to expand Medicaid, there will be even more.) American society is becoming stratified in ways that summon images of India. The lack of access to a decent education has made it more and more difficult for black American children in public schools to rise above their station.

Latoya Peterson Conversations about social mobility fascinate me, because they happen in two separate spheres: the economics section, where the decline of solid middle-class jobs is documented, and the personal-interest (style) section, which illustrates the broader structural workings of poverty. I'd love to see the two converge a bit more. A [December] *Washington Post* piece [about Pennsylvania teenager Tabitha Rouzzo] frustrated me: The article was a voyeuristic view of poverty, with questionable items presented with no further comment or investigation. The reporter followed Tabitha's story well, but ignored the rest of the family—and most people aren't in poverty alone.

When Tabitha's sister decides to stop going to school, there is no further investigation or understanding. Was she being bullied? Was she depressed? Did she, like so many others, [get] worn down by feeling like a failure each day? I feel like the relative level of privilege in the press corps leads us to miss some key aspects to stories about social mobility—links to mental health, addiction, or collapsing social systems are often under-explored. Does it make sense to have a welfare policy that discourages people from working? Does it make sense to allow a minimum wage that is not a living wage? The framework is vital.

I've loved the reporting on the mounting [financial] pressure on Americans, particularly the crowdsourced stories on Tumblr. Yahoo did a project called Down But Not Out,

Dark shadows

In Washington, murder turns out to be color-coded

It's been a big year for Homicide Watch. Last summer's Kickstarter campaign succeeded admirably, raising \$47,450. The website went from an almost-fatal hiatus to hiring its first staff members, who could continue to cover murders in DC while the founders, Laura and Chris Amico, are at Harvard for the year. Homicide Watch also announced a partnership in Chicago with the *Sun-Times*.

The Chicago expansion is a big deal for several reasons. It provides much-needed revenue, helps the Amicos build out their platform, and will perforce provide a serious proving ground, as Chicago sees far more murders annually than DC (though at a slightly lower per-capita rate).

But the Chicago expansion is most culturally significant for what it says about newspaper culture. Chicago is famously a newspaper town, home of "If your mother says she loves you, check it out," and *The Front Page*, as well as the recent near-death experiences of its two major dailies. Newspapers

have covered murder in a particular way for as long as there's been a crime desk. And Homicide Watch doesn't do it that way.

Homicide Watch's greatest contribution to crime reporting is a "just the facts" service that is part AP reporting style and part database feed, whose basic premise is that if someone is murdered in your city, it's a story. If you want to see how radical this idea is, and how much race affects reporting, take a look at Homicide Watch's hometown.

Last fall, *The Washington Post* published an interactive map of every murder in DC between 2000 and 2011. The paper never acknowledged the existence of Homicide Watch in the piece, but the use of a database to track local murders in that famously murderous town is hard to read as anything but the sincerest form of flattery.

The *Post* version, though, isn't a carbon copy of Homicide Watch. Above right is the default view of each page.

The *Post*'s default view is a map. Homicide Watch's default view is a face. The *Post*'s view is aggregate and historical; Homicide Watch's is personal and recent. The *Post* focuses on murders, Homicide Watch on victims. The *Post* gives you all the murders; you have to zoom in for the details.

putting faces and stories to the long-term unemployed, then expanding to looking at mortgages and student loans.

A clear theme is emerging: Americans bought into the Dream (home ownerships and college educations) without realizing how the reality of those dreams has changed. In combination with a competitive, machine-aided, global workforce, Americans have lost ground and found themselves unable to catch a break—much less a bootstrap. And I think we are only seeing the beginning of the stories.

Carmen Wong Ulrich Social mobility is tied to access to education—affordable, non-crippling-debt college education. Granted, we need even better *high-school* graduation rates and grades from black/Latino kids, too, but once these kids get into college, the dropout rates are higher for poor minorities, and rates of “bad” student loan debt (read: private loans) are too high. I’d love more education for minority students on how to manage the college system/process, personally and culturally, as well as how to pay for it in a smarter way. While mentoring and working with Latino and black students going into college for the past 15-plus years, the lack of clear, informed strategies to get that degree is frightening. I get the question, “Is this degree worth it?” Hell yes. [But the process] needs to be directed, treated like what it is: an investment, and a business/economic/life strategy.

To Vivek’s point about entrepreneurship, keep in mind that many of us have/had no financial safety net or support, should a business fail, and education is key to economic growth in a less risky way. When there’s no net, you’re more likely to not swing so high.

Farai Chideya How are we supposed to describe class stratification in a country that claims not to have class?

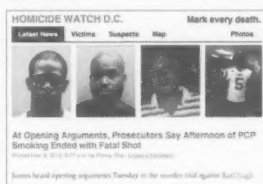
I loved the recent piece by [Salon staff writer] Mary Beth

Williams, “On not being middle class in New York City” [which appeared on her personal Tumblr]: “a classically tunnel-visioned *New York Times* feature about what it means to be middle class in Manhattan. The *Times* would have you believe that to live in the Apple, you’re going to need about \$235K a year.... [W]hen the *Times* runs a feature like that, it treats the millions of New Yorkers who are somehow getting by and raising families and living with basic human dignity like they’re invisible. That pisses me off.”

Carmen Wong Ulrich Silly of us not to realize that “class” exists, but its definition depends greatly on who’s doing the talking, and what about. How someone speaks could have you deem them of a lower “class” even if he/she is a self-made millionaire. Professionally, some deem those with no college degree (or even no grad degree) as of a lesser “class.” However, there is a real discussion about the ability of Americans to maintain a solid middle class and what *middle* means. Does that mean home ownership? Two cars and cellphones? How much money you make, or what you do with it?

Monica Guzman I’ll echo Mary Beth Williams and say that tone deafness with regard to class—writing about people in a certain place in a certain situation in a way that seems out of touch to those people—is a problem. But it’s a tricky problem. Who else, after all, is talking about class? It’s one of those burdens media must carry, figuring out how to talk about something there’s really no language for, no agreed-upon codes, and little consensus across regions. They’re bound to get hammered when they try. But at least we try. Class is a force in American culture. The denial of class, too, is a particular feature of American self-perception, where it exists.

Maybe it’s one of the many areas in journalism where we have to take risks—where, for the sake of informing the



Homicide Watch starts with the most recent events; you have to zoom out for the bigger picture. The most recent murder the *Post* puts on its map was in December of 2011. As I write this, the most recent murder Homicide Watch put on its map was last night—Howard Venable Jr., stabbed to death at Fuller and 16th NW.

The *Post*’s map is about neighborhoods and patterns. (When I showed the *Post*’s map to my journalism students and asked whom they thought the ideal audience was, they said, “Realtors.”) Homicide Watch’s map is about people and events. The *Post*’s map tells you things like, “Stay the hell away from Anacostia.” HW tells you that Venable was 68 years old, and gives you a tip line for the cops, if you have any idea who killed him.

Not to put too fine a point on it, *The Washington Post* has produced a white-people map of murder, a map that assumes you couldn’t possibly know the victim. Homicide Watch has produced a brown-people map—a map that assumes you might, a map for a city where brown people are 30 times more likely to be murdered than white people.

As we live through the data-driven transformation of journalism, we should never assume that information is impersonal or unbiased, or unaffected by editorial decisions, both big and little. (In an inexplicable design choice, the *Post* decided “brown = bad” on its map.) The Amicos haven’t just shown us how to do better reporting for civically vital issues, at lower cost, and greater benefit. They’ve shown us that even reporting the facts has to be thought of as a political act. They’ve shown us how the choices of journalists and editors continue to matter, even in an age of big data and real-time feeds. For all the neutral style and straight-ahead presentation, the Amicos’ greatest gift, as people inventing a new model of journalism, turns out to be their sense of humanity.

—Clay Shirky

public, we have to pick words and phrases and concepts, do our darnedest to make sure they reflect reality, and put them to the ultimate test—publication. If we're off, we're off, and rather than shy away from it, we should own the conversation about why, and how to make future coverage better.

Coverage of race and immigration in America

Farai Chideya If we were to write the mea culpa of race coverage for 2050, what would it be? What are we missing now? And how do we deal with what we missed before?

Raju Narisetti In hindsight, we might be apologizing for treating race through a white/nonwhite prism, long after America became much more multicultural, and race reporting ought to have become as much about covering "white" issues, and not just in relation to nonwhite "minorities."

Vivek Wadhwa By 2050, we will be color-blind or not exist as a race. Humanity will evolve to the point that we create an abundance of food, water, energy, knowledge—all the things we fight for and that divide society. Along the way, we will have much more time to think—and to evolve. I have little doubt that if we don't blow ourselves up in the next decade or two, we will achieve our potential as a race.

Raju Narisetti I love Vivek for many reasons—he is at once aspirational and idealistic. And sometimes unrealistic. As in a race-blind 2050.

Maria Ebrahimji Our "In America" section on CNN.com focuses on these issues, through the lens of identity. Sometimes we as journalists think too much about the facts and not enough about providing context to our viewer/reader. I recall that a lot of the news reporting after the last census focused on who we are as Americans (our racial makeup, economic diversity, etc.). I am more fascinated by the idea of *how* we are living and *why* we live that way.

Eric Deggans I write a lot about how race and prejudice play out in media. But I was still shocked during an interview with Shirley Sherrod—yes, that "Breitbart" Shirley Sherrod [who was bullied into resigning from a government job after racial comments she made were taken out of context]—when she told me a high school near her home in Georgia still has segregated proms. Far as the nation has come on racial issues, especially in big cities, there is still a lot of prejudice and ignorance out there. I have a feeling future news outlets will be apologizing for allowing the level of racial animus toward nonwhite people which still appears on Fox News Channel, the Drudge Report, The Daily Caller, and many areas of conservative media.

Tristan Ahtone When it comes to reporting in Indian Country, one of the biggest issues I see is reporters' inability or lack of interest in getting to know communities on a level deeper than can be found through statistics. Crime, casinos, and cultural revitalization are all important topics, but reporters could be digging deeper. Spend time with the communities

you want to report on. Native communities are traditionally closed off to outsiders, and in gaining a community's trust, you'll be able to get to stories that are truly underreported and important to the people you cover.

Jeff Yang I've been deeply intrigued by the implications of multiracialism on race. We're rapidly entering a period in our national history where race and ethnicity no longer fit the boxes we've conventionally assigned them to (if they ever really did, as more than clumsy shorthand). Our first black president is also our first multiracial president, and our first Third Culture Kid president [since he grew up outside his parents' culture]. The president has consciously claimed black identity (and told the story of that process), but he has also at varying times claimed Pacific identity, from his upbringing in Hawaii; Desi identity, from his close friendships with South-Asian Americans and perhaps his years in Indonesia, though that doesn't entirely factor; and white, lower-middle-class descent. What's interesting is that none of these are actually contradictory to his personal narrative. And we're seeing more and more people for whom that is true. Are we finally seeing, not an erasure of race, but a divorcing of racial identity from racial origin/phenotype?

Raquel Cepeda In 2050, we'll be casting a wide net when apologizing to Latino/Latina-Americans for sticking to archaic black-white paradigms when reporting race. In fact, we won't have enough rope left on earth to create a net wide enough. We'll probably still not know who exactly we are talking about, since the largest news networks won't be able to stop cramming us into checkboxes. Perhaps we'll apologize for not recognizing the class, biological, and phenotypic diversity that exists within this group.

By 2050, Latinos, born liminal by definition (mixed-race, regardless of phenotype), will have become so used to negotiating being in racial limbo (by American standards/constructs), that we'll likely take over the media. This person will be a woman and my descendant, and her name will be Arianita Huffinguez. Seriously, though, we need to deconstruct race, in order for it not to "matter" anymore—but that takes time and effort and work and inclusion.

Latoya Peterson I'm with Jeff—the very way we identify race and racial boundaries is changing before our eyes. All the racial constructs are flawed—they are our attempts to make our complicated histories fit somewhere. But reality continually changes—and our understanding of that reality and our identity changes as well. So I would not be surprised to see news outlets in 2050 finally being forced to tackle many of these questions head-on, as the idea of a "neutral" white default erodes. And this will be good—in many ways, increased racial awareness will force people to confront their own internalized biases about what "black" consumers, "Latino" consumers, "Asian" consumers want, and instead remember that each set has dozens of factions.

I think news consumers in 2050 will be amazed at how little voices of color participated in national conversations, and how limited the perspectives truly were. And I would

expect strong, passionate conversations on national identity, as all the different Americas have to converge at some point.

Jeff Yang Raquel, the racialization of Hispanics (defying the whole "Hispanics can be of any race" line) is already happening. Multicultural MONITOR's demo question bank, like the Census, asks about Hispanic ethnicity first and then for a racial identification (white, black, Asian, Native American, other). The percentage of respondents to the survey who declare themselves Hispanic and do not claim any (other) race is significant—over 20 percent—and rising.

Raquel Cepeda Jeff, from my own reporting on the subject and personal background, I have found that the racial line is left blank in many cases (or, alternatively, I've known people who have checked every racial box), because Latino immigrants and their children are looking at the question [through] a different lens than we do here in the States.

June Cross [Looking back from 2050,] we will have missed the nuances of race and ethnicity. When I get together with my Latino friends, they talk about how different their individual cultures are: Mexican, Dominican, Puerto Rican, Colombian, and Guatemalan [cultures] not only have different holidays and use the same word to connote different things; they also speak Spanish in different accents. The cities that receive immigrants are creating a melting pot of Latin America that I haven't seen reported at all in mainstream press. Ditto for the immigrant flow from Africa and the West Indies. Further, in the press's binary paradigm, undocumented immigrants are rarely Russian, Eastern European, Canadian, Irish—even though *their* ranks also fill immigration detention centers.

Eric Deggans Race is covered as an event rather than an ongoing concern. We hear regularly about the Dow Jones Average, the activities of City Hall, the latest action by Congress. But we don't often hear about race, outside of special stories—developed over weeks, months, sometimes years—that drop into the news mix, have a brief impact, and then are gone. Small wonder, then, it is so hard to talk about race in a measured way outside of media. We are so used to talking about race in crisis, any mention of the issue in a news story leads to assumptions that there must be a crisis at hand.

Maria Ebrahimi It's possible to create new ways of tackling diversity. For me, that began in my friend's apartment in Chicago in 2006. We wanted to combine our creative energies and our passion for writing into a project through which we could inspire others and illuminate the diversity found in the American Muslim community. The result of that brainstorm was *I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim*, a collection of 40 essays by 40 American-born Muslim women under 40. The process of collecting contributors (and their essays) for the book was not much of a departure from the work I do at CNN—identify, research, and cultivate guests and talent who have great stories to tell. However, this time it was not *me* (or my network) telling their stories; we were creating a platform for these women to speak for themselves.

America is *already* diverse, and a diversity of thought comes with that. No longer does the average citizen need journalists (or *anyone*, really) to tell their stories. Whether through instantly published videos or in 140 characters, we all have the ability to message and share our thoughts—instantly.

Jeff Yang I [like] how NPR's *Tell Me More* covers race and ethnicity, not just because I'm a fan of Michel Martin (and an occasional contributor to the program). TMM neither hides/diminishes its focus on race and cultural difference, nor does it exceptionalize it. They cover these issues as if they're relevant to everyone and should be accessible to everyone, as opposed to simply inside baseball for POCs [people of color]. Given that this happens to be the truth, it's sad that this stands out as "refreshing." Why is it that stories about the economy invariably center on [white people] unless they're explicitly about the "multicultural economy"? I've literally never seen a story about "the middle class" that showcases the story of an African-American, Hispanic, or Asian-American middle-class household. *Tell Me More* flips that script; it covers these topics from an alternate-world default where people of color make up a majority or plurality of the population—the world we'll all be living in in about two decades.



Docu drama Need historical context? 'Make Some Noise: Civil Rights at 50' bows in August at the Newseum in Washington, DC. Included is this December 1963 issue of the *Mississippi Free Press*, which calls upon the 'self-respecting Negroes of Jackson' to reject 'second-class-citizenship status.'

Eric Deggans Future news outlets will be amazed at how all the groups of cultures we define as nonwhite Hispanics are marginalized in today's media. Although their votes were a big reason Obama stayed in the White House, we only saw questions about Hispanics related to immigration, and during one debate here in Florida, NBC only brought out a Latino anchor from Spanish-language Telemundo to ask immigration questions before he left the stage again. Given that this group will soon dominate the youth demographic so many media outlets court, it seems particularly short-sighted, even in a completely economic context.

Raquel Cepeda Eric, totally agree. Although, because of the biological diversity that exists within, say, any one immediate Hispanic/Latino family, the term "nonwhite Hispanics" is mostly misleading. Hoping the census revisits those questions in 2020 and beyond.

Carmen Wong Ulrich Thank you, Raquel. Though we're fewer in number, Afro-Latinos tend to fall through the Mexican (majority) and African-American cracks and/or we ride both lines, or simply reject one. I land on way too many sides (see: my name), but I'll leave you with this question I never thought I'd hear, and from my own, half-European (read: blond with blue eyes) daughter (six), after a regular visit to her first cousins (black twin girls) in Prince George's County, MD: "Mooooom! Why can't I be BLACK!" Amazing times.

June Cross I run into this too, Carmen. I have Jewish nieces and nephews who are white—and they love to show off their black auntie. Who'da thunk? We in New York often ignore or, worse, disparage the 49 percent of the country that voted GOP. I often use *The Dallas Morning News* as a touchstone to that quarter. On the morning after Obama's inauguration, they published a cross section of religious leaders responding to the president's second inaugural address.

Robert Hernandez We actually may be "post-race" by 2050, but we still will write mea culpas on things like homosexual coverage. Immigration seems like something we'll always debate, blaming actual "aliens" for taking our jobs. I think we'll also write a mea culpa about science—global warming, questioning evolution and such.

Baratunde Thurston The equivalent of magazine covers will ask, "What Happened to All the White People?" and it will be an in-depth multipart report on how whites willingly and involuntarily gave up power over the previous 100 years. Parts of this piece will focus on backlash, resentment, and failure, and it will highlight mass incarceration and persistent segregation as examples of this. But the piece will close on a more hopeful tone, pointing to the efforts of groups like La Raza and NAACP to help counsel White America through this difficult transition. We will ultimately say that young people connected by technology and global culture helped salvage and reinvigorate the American Dream. The piece will get a Pulitzer. My granddaughter will be the author.

June Cross I had a convo with an older white man last night. He was amazed by the "five different colors" in Obama's family. I thought he meant the shade of magenta, blue, gray—but no: He meant the colors within Obama's family. "I never thought I would see such a thing in a presidential family," he marveled. Not that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson didn't have Technicolor families; but Caucasians still question. I am not as sanguine as the rest of you that all the problems of the world will be solved by 2050.

Baratunde Thurston National Intelligence Council does a report on the world in 2030, and some of the charts go out to 2050. We're all going to be singing, "Brown & Yellow, Brown & Yellow, Brown & Yellow!"

Farai Chideya Part of the task is to reward reporters or reporting that can bridge cultures. [Vietnamese-American] journalist and fiction writer Andrew Lam does that well. What have you seen that does things well of late?

Raju Narisetti *Washington Post's* The Root, despite lack of commercial success or scale, still continues to do a good job of covering major stories through the prism of race.

Raquel Cepeda From a Latino-American perspective, I've seen/read sprinkles of great reporting on race/ethnicity in *The Christian Science Monitor*. WSJ has published some slamming pieces. When CNN aired "Latino In America," they published interesting online content. . . . I don't know if there is one site that really investigates the Latino/Latina-American demo well, like, say, Root.com does.

Doug Mitchell I'm giving a talk to an all-white group of alt-newspaper people tomorrow. I want to ask them about the word *diversity*. I'm wondering if it's time to redefine it or change it? And I would argue that 2050 is here.

Farai Chideya Here's the thing: We can and will change terms like *diversity*, but the issue is not the terminology.

Doug Mitchell You're right. [And] the NewU Entrepreneur Fellowship through UNITY Journalists and the Ford Foundation has me thinking on how to get more of journalists of color to become the employer, not just the employee.

Tristan Ahtone Ownership is a huge problem. I think some problems can be solved when we have a diverse newsroom, able to push management to say what is important, and why.

Farai Chideya Money, power, ownership, and leadership—all will factor into how the journalism of 2050 covers race, diversity, wealth, and class. Given the tremendous changes our field has gone through in the past 40 years, mid-21st-century media is bound to be very different from today. But we humans being who we are—curious, inquisitive, and sometimes fearful—there's bound to be an ongoing debate about some of the same issues we're puzzling through today. **CJR**

Inside stories

Nearly one in 100 Americans is incarcerated. But how well can journalists cover prisons if they can't get past the gates?

BY BETH SCHWARTZAPFEL

When Rob Wildeboer, a criminal-and-legal-affairs reporter for public radio WBEZ in Chicago, read a report from a local watchdog group about conditions in Illinois state prisons, he was taken aback: "The stuff that they were saying—if true—was just horrendous." The report, and his own follow-up reporting, revealed vermin infestations so severe that a cockroach had to be surgically removed from a man's ear. Hundreds of bored and restless inmates—some serving time for nothing more than driving on a revoked license—crowded dormitory-style into dank, flooded basements. Six hundred men sharing seven toilets. So Wildeboer did what any good journalist would do: He asked to see for himself. "I expected we'd get in, to be honest," he says.

Instead, he found himself at the center of a yearlong standoff, during which the governor of Illinois, Pat Quinn, publicly issued blanket denials to journalists seeking access to the state's prisons, and then refused to sit down with Wildeboer—or any other reporter—to discuss this policy or its rationale. It wasn't until WBEZ, with the help of two pro bono attorneys, threatened a federal lawsuit that the governor backed down, and even then only partway. Tours would be allowed, he said, but no tape recorders or video cameras. "It's a step in the right direction," says Wildeboer.

Prisons are an abundant source of scoops and stories for enterprising reporters. Life "behind the walls" is rich with drama and moral complexity, and departments of corrections are as badly in need of journalistic sunshine as any other government agency. But to cover them is difficult. They are, of course, closed institutions, meant to lock some people in and keep others out. Reporters often "don't know how to get access, or they're refused access and they throw up their hands," says Michele Deitch, a University of Texas law professor who specializes in prison oversight. Even those who can get in must navigate a complicated relationship with correctional administrators whose goals and needs are often at odds with their own.

The skyrocketing US incarceration rate is by now a familiar story. Thanks to "tough on crime" politics and the War on Drugs, almost one in every 100 Americans is in prison or jail, a rate that leaves even China and Russia in the dust. And lockup does not come cheap. The average state spends almost a billion dollars a year running its prisons. The growth of prison spending in state budgets outpaced every other expenditure except Medicaid, according to a 2009 study by the Pew Center on the States.

Compared to other areas that siphon significant public resources, such as healthcare, prisons get vanishingly little media attention. Ted Gest, a longtime crime beat reporter and president of Criminal Justice Journalists (a nonprofit dedicated to improving coverage of crime and law enforcement), guesses there are a half-dozen reporters across the country covering corrections, some of whom have other duties as well. "It's never been perceived as that newsworthy," he says. "Most prisons, unless there's a riot going on, [are] just not considered that sexy."

Still, it is hard to overstate the importance of covering prisons. For starters: 95 percent of prisoners—more than 600,000 people each year—eventually go home. What happened while they were inside—whether they received job training, adequate healthcare, or learned positive life skills, or whether they were embittered, recruited into a gang, or made connections in the criminal underworld—has profound consequences for the society they return to. And the ripples extend far beyond the prisoners themselves: Almost two million children have a parent in prison—to say nothing of inmates' parents, spouses, and siblings. Half a million correctional officers work behind the walls.

Given this, "we want to make sure there's accountability for the results of all this imprisonment," says Jenifer Warren, a writer and editor in Sacramento who for more than a decade covered corrections for the *Los Angeles Times*. "If you're going to use incarceration as a tool and response to



Stacked odds California is fighting a judicial order to cap its prison population to reduce crowding.

crime, you want to make sure your money is being used wisely, and you're getting a return on your investment. It's billions and billions of dollars that could be spent on other things."

To ensure accountability, the reporters who do take an interest in prisons need access. But policies vary widely from state to state. Some states are models of openness. In Rhode Island, for instance, journalists are not only allowed access, but are "encouraged...to visit correctional facilities and to report on programs and activities" as a matter of policy. And even the sorts of negative stories that have made prison administrators in other states wary of the press are there considered "a cost of doing business" in Rhode Island, according to Department of Corrections director A. T. Wall. "Most of what we do is behind walls and fences," Wall says. "If we don't make ourselves available to the media, don't let people see a lot of what we do, we're going to perpetuate a stereotype that we're running dungeons."

At the other end of the scale, according to freelance journalist Jessica Pupovac, who did a state-by-state survey as part of a journalism-school master's thesis, are states like Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Michigan. Each allows occasional press access—Alabama's Corrections Commissioner cited two recent occasions when the press was allowed to accompany the state's Prison Oversight Committee on a tour—but in these five states, written policies, openness, and transparency are "the exception to the rule," says Pupovac.

Most states fall somewhere in the middle, allowing certain types of access but not others. California, for instance, does allow tours, but does not grant requests for interviews with specific inmates. Governor Jerry Brown recently

vetoed a bill that would have allowed greater media access to prison—the ninth time a California governor has done so in the last 20 years.

Making the situation more complicated is the fact that the rules covering media visits are typically a patchwork of legislation, regulations written by administrators, and case-by-case decisions made by the wardens of individual facilities. Few states have official channels through which reporters can appeal if their requests are denied.

In the case of WBEZ, "we went through all the proper channels," says Cate Cahan, the editor who worked with Wildeboer. "We want to do things properly." WBEZ submitted to the press office a request to tour two facilities, and was dismissed via email. When the journalists appealed to the governor's office, they

were again dismissed, in one line. Stonewalled, Wildeboer did what reporting he could from the outside—interviewing inmates who had already been released—and the refusals themselves became fodder for his work. "It becomes a government story; it becomes a transparency story," says Cahan.

After Wildeboer's seven-minute story about lack of access aired in August, reporters began to pepper the governor and the Department of Corrections with questions. "Security comes first, and it isn't a country club," Quinn told reporters. There are, of course, legitimate reasons that prison administrators might be wary of the media. It takes staff time to guard the journalist, for one. And "it would be so easy for a journalist on a first-time tour of a facility to freak out about something," says Michele Deitch. For instance, during the day, inmates are rarely confined to their cells; unwitting journalists may panic when they see dozens of inmates moving around freely between programs and dayrooms and meals. "Journalists need to be pretty damn educated before they go in," Deitch says.

Leaving aside safety considerations, the people who run prisons are in a delicate situation with regard to the press. "In corrections, the bad news is bad news, and the good news can be bad news," says Rhode Island's A. T. Wall. For example, Wall says, he likes to showcase educational and other programs offered to inmates at his prisons "because they're consistent with our mission to foster a successful transition back into the community." However, "when we do attract media attention, there can sometimes be a backlash of people who are offended that taxpayer dollars are being spent that way."

In extreme cases, public outcry can jeopardize the program.

More than 600,000 prisoners go home each year. What happened to them on the inside has profound consequences for the society they return to.

"The public could get very up-in-arms—*They should be breaking rocks!*" says Deitch. The coverage "could end up being really counterproductive if it's not reported on in a smart way."

Press policies are often crafted with extreme sensitivity to victims, an effort to avoid reporting that might be perceived as "glorifying prisoners" or giving individual inmates "celebrity" status. "I try to put myself in the shoes of a victim," says Kim Thomas, the Department of Corrections commissioner for Alabama. "If I was sitting in my living room and the person who destroyed my family and my life all of a sudden appears on TV—I don't want to be the commissioner who does that."

On those grounds, Thomas declines every single press request to interview inmates. Rhode Island's A. T. Wall has taken a different tack. "Sensitivity to victims, as my lawyers have reminded me," he says, "is not a constitutional right."

Meanwhile, journalists' access to prisons is not a constitutional right *per se*, either. The courts have repeatedly

held that journalists do not have any rights of access greater than that of the general public. Of course, they have no *fewer* rights of access, either. WBEZ's threatened lawsuit homed in on that right to equal access. State prison officials "permitted school groups, church groups, the John Howard [watchdog group] all to have access to the prisons," says Jeffrey Colman, one of the lawyers representing the station (John Howard's reports prompted Wildeboer's initial efforts). "I believe that's the reason why the Department of Corrections caved in: because they knew that to give access to John Howard and not the media raised a significant equal protection claim under the Fourteenth Amendment."

Reporters who find themselves barred from their local prisons, and who don't have pro bono lawyers, still have options. "Prisons are functions of state governments, and state governments keep all sorts of records," says Jenifer Warren. If you can't get in, she says, follow the paper trail: state budgets, lawsuits, disciplinary proceedings, labor contracts, parole hearing transcripts, lobbying records, and state personnel board files—all are good sources of information. If you can't interview current inmates, you can interview former inmates; talk to people who just got out, people on probation and parole, and their friends and family.

It's worth the effort. Despite the human and financial reach of prisons, says Deitch, "What goes on in there is a complete mystery. It's a leap of faith for the public. The role the press can play is to keep that light shining on what's going on in prison facilities. They make sure that we get the prisons that we want and we deserve."

BETH SCHWARTZAPFEL (blackapple.org) is a Boston-based writer who often covers the criminal justice system.

Fortresses of solitude

Even more rare: journalist access to prison isolation units

BY JAMES RIDGEWAY

Supermax prisons and solitary confinement units are our domestic black sites—hidden places where human beings endure unspeakable punishments, without benefit of due process in any court of law. On the say-so of corrections officials, American prisoners can be placed in conditions of extreme isolation and sensory deprivation for months, years, or even decades. At least 80,000 men, women, and children live in such conditions on any given day in the United States. And they are not merely separated from others for safety reasons. They are effectively buried alive. Most live in concrete cells the size of an average parking space, often windowless, cut off from all communication by solid steel doors. If they are lucky, they will be allowed out for an hour a day to shower or to exercise alone in cages resembling dog runs.

Most have never committed a violent act in prison. They are locked down because they've been classified as "high risk," or because of nonviolent misbehavior—anything from mouthing off or testing positive for marijuana to exhibiting the symptoms of untreated mental illness. A recent lawsuit filed on behalf of prisoners in ADX, the federal supermax in Florence, CO, described how humans respond to such isolation over the long-term. Some "interminably wail, scream, and bang on the walls of their cells" or carry on "delusional conversations with voices they hear in their heads." Some "mutilate their bodies with razors, shards of glass, sharpened chicken bones, and writing utensils" or "swallow razor blades, nail clippers, parts of radios and televisions, broken glass, and other dangerous objects." Still others "spread feces and other human waste and body fluids throughout their



All alone An Alabama prisoner in solitary projects his face, in Sean Kernan's 1979 shot.

cells [and] throw it at the correctional staff." While less than 5 percent of US prisoners nationwide are held in solitary, close to 50 percent of all prison suicides take place there.

After three years of reporting on solitary confinement for Solitary Watch, a website I co-founded, I'm convinced that much of what happens in these places constitutes torture. How is it possible that a human-rights crisis of this magnitude can carry on year after year, with impunity?

I believe part of the answer has to do with how effectively the nature of these sites have been hidden from the press and, by extension, the public. With few exceptions, solitary confinement cells have been kept firmly off-limits

to journalists—with the approval of the federal courts, who defer to corrections officials' purported need to maintain "safety and security." If the First Amendment ever manages to make it past the prison gates at all, it is stopped short at the door to the isolation unit.

AS A REPORTER, I RAN INTO SOLITARY confinement three years ago in writing an article about Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox, members of the so-called Angola 3, who have lived in solitary confinement in Louisiana since they were convicted of killing a prison guard in 1972. After writing an initial article about the case, based on public records, I sought permission to visit Angola and interview the two men. I was told by a deputy warden that the prison wanted nothing to do with me, because officials didn't like what I had written. The ACLU of Louisiana took up my case, gathering evidence to show that while the prison denied me entrance, it had welcomed many others, including press, politicians, religious figures, schoolchildren, tourist buses, Hollywood filmmakers, canoeists paddling past on the Mississippi, and such notables as Miss Louisiana. Since Angola had such an open-door policy, its discrimination against me was actionable. Warden Burl Cain backed off and granted me what turned out to be the standard guided tour of the plantation prison. It included numerous dormitories, chapels, and even the death chamber—but not the solitary confinement units. Even the ACLU couldn't help me penetrate those fortresses of solitude.

It would be the first of many times I was turned away from such units.

While reporting on solitary confinement in New York State, I was readily shown around Auburn Correctional Facility by the affable warden there. I saw all kinds of cells, yards, and workshops—everything but the so-called Special Housing Unit (SHU) where prisoners are held in solitary. These units, I was told, are never shown to the media. At another New York prison, I managed to visit (under the watchful eye of a guard) with a man who has been in solitary for nearly 25 years. Since the Department of Corrections media policy forbids media visits to prisoners in "segregation," I had to withhold the fact that I was a reporter, and sign in as his "friend."

Once I launched Solitary Watch, I learned of a handful

SEAN KERNAN

of other reporters who were encountering the same restrictions—and working around them and in spite of them. “I was never able to get inside” a SHU in New York, Mary Beth Pfeiffer, a reporter for the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, wrote in an email. “In 2001, after I began writing about links between solitary confinement, mental illness, and suicide, they refused even to let me into any of their prisons except through the visiting room. Even there, I once had my notes seized by prison officials who claimed note-taking was not permitted.” Pfeiffer says she relied on “official reports of conditions and suicides there, and the accounts of former prisoners.”

George Pawlaczyk and Beth Hundsdorfer of the *Belleville News-Democrat* authored a series of articles called “Trapped in Tamms,” about the supermax prison in southern Illinois. The 2009 series, which won a George Polk award, revealed horrendous treatment of mentally ill prisoners and the cruel attitudes of the prison officials, including doctors. Unable to secure a visit, Pawlaczyk says their reporting was based largely on court documents, mostly depositions, and the surprise finding that one Illinois county’s mental health reports were filed and open to the public.

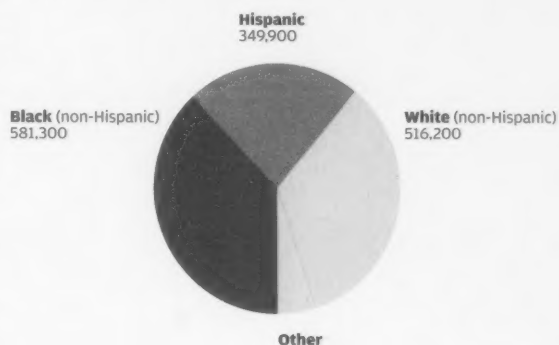
Susan Greene, the former *Denver Post* reporter who in 2012 wrote “The Gray Box,” a blistering report focusing on ADX, for the Dart Society, says she couldn’t even get close to the prison, which has been completely off-limits to the press since 9/11. “I have had absolutely no access to the place at all,” she told me. When she pulled up in front of the driveway to the remote prison complex, she was chased away by armed guards. But in addition to public records, Greene based her reporting on correspondence with prisoners in extreme isolation, carried on over more than a year. Ironically, once her article was published, she could not send it to her correspondents in ADX, due to a policy against allowing prisoners’ names in an article. “So I redacted all the prisoners’ names,” she said, “and then it came back saying something like, ‘You can still see it if you hold it up to the light.’ Out of frustration and wanting to be a pain in the ass, I Exacto-knifed out all the names and sent it, and it still didn’t get through.”

Shane Bauer, who wrote a 2012 expose about solitary confinement in California for *Mother Jones*, also relied heavily on correspondence with dozens of prisoners in Pelican Bay and other state SHUs who had staged several highly publicized hunger strikes after years or decades in isolation. Bauer spent more than two years in an Iranian prison after being captured on the Iran-Iraq border, including four months in isolation, and thus has the rare perspective of someone who has himself experienced solitary. He also succeeded in gaining access to Pelican Bay, though it was severely limited and carefully orchestrated. Bauer says he was taken to a unit full of men who had cooperated with prison officials by passing on information about prison gangs, “and was allowed to interview one inmate while the gang investigator stood by.” Visits to the solitary cells were refused, as were interviews by the warden and top corrections officials.

Lance Tapley began writing about solitary confinement for the *Portland Phoenix* seven years ago, when a supermax prisoner named Deane Brown got in touch with him. Brown “wanted to expose to the outside world the torture

Racial/ethnic breakdown of US prison population

1,537,415 state and federal prisoners serving more than one year in 2011



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

he was experiencing and seeing in the Maine State Prison’s Special Management Unit,” Tapley wrote to me. Initially denied access to SMU prisoners, Tapley was able to convince the governor’s office to intervene. Then he was allowed to interview several men “in hand and foot shackles on the other side of a Plexiglas window.” Those six interviews and a leaked official videotape of a cell extraction, plus interviews with the corrections commissioner, defense attorneys, and others, formed the basis of his first supermax stories. Once those stories were published, Tapley was banned from the prison. And like many prisoners who talk to the press, Deane Brown faced retaliation: He was shipped to a prison out of state.

Where journalists have succeeded, one way or another, in penetrating the black sites, their reporting has undeniably had an impact. In Maine, it helped spark a grassroots movement and a legislative initiative, which eventually spurred the prison system to reduce its use of solitary confinement. In New York, it became ammunition in a battle to keep mentally ill prisoners out of solitary. And in Illinois, it provided fuel for an effort that has convinced the governor to shut down Tamms supermax prison.

The stories have been effective. But their scarcity also suggests that the lack of press access to these sites around the nation has stifled public debate on a significant issue of policy and human rights. “Solitary confinement is a brutal form of prison punishment that has claimed many lives and caused untold suffering,” says Mary Beth Pfeiffer. “That is the story that officials do not want told.” Until we are allowed to tell it properly—until we can visit solitary units ourselves, and speak unhindered with prisoners and corrections officers—we cannot fulfill our duty to shine a light into society’s darkest corners. **CJR**

JAMES RIDGEWAY has been a reporter for close to 50 years, writing for *The Village Voice*, *The New Republic*, and *Mother Jones*, among other publications, and is the author of 16 books. He is co-editor, with Jean Casella, of the website *Solitary Watch* (www.solitarywatch.com) and is a 2012 Soros Justice Media Fellow.



Portrait #4228 Wayne Wymer, Flatware Jiggerman, Homer Laughlin China; Newell, WV

ON THE JOB

Made in America

YOU COULD CALL CARL COREY'S WORK DERIVATIVE, AND mean no disrespect. His current project, "Blue: A Portrait of the American Worker," grew out of his upcoming book, *For Love And Money*, about family businesses, which emerged from his previous book, *Tavern League*, about bars. "As I was doing *Tavern League*, I realized that most of these places were family businesses," says Corey. "So I spent a year and a half photographing family businesses that were at least 50 years old. Some of the larger ones were factories—shipyards, a paper mill, that sort of thing. And I got interested in the workers there, and how important they are to our country."

That led to "Blue." Corey began the project in May 2012, and will keep at it until May 2015. When he's finished, he hopes to have created a broad portrait of the American working class on the job.

While the photographs reproduced here present a fairly traditional conception of working-class jobs, "Blue" will, naturally, evolve to account for the changing nature of the American working class. Office workers, cashiers, baristas, and home-healthcare workers will enter Corey's viewfinder, along with more factory and mill workers. "People who are paid by the hour or by the piece," he says. "I want to raise awareness of the need for people to earn a living wage, a wage that allows working people to humbly raise a family. That is what is disappearing in this country."

He was struck by the pride the people he meets take in their work, no matter how rudimentary the task; and also that management appreciates its workers, even at the larger places he visited. "There are multiple generations working in the same steel mill, or at the Woolrich plant," he says. It is a perspective largely missing from the polarized discourse around worker-owner relations that predominates in stories about, for instance, the assault on collective bargaining in Wisconsin and elsewhere, and in the Occupy movement. Then again, he admits, "I need permission [to shoot], so maybe the only places that are letting me in are those that do care about their employees."

The images are deliberately simple, and focused on the worker. "I'm from Chicago, so I subscribe to the whole Bauhaus thing," Corey says. "I try not to let technique get in the way of the subject. And I never get into that lofty discussion of the aesthetics of my work, because it starts to become fluff. Just look at the picture, or the painting; read the book. I can't really tell you why these pictures work other than they're honest. And people appreciate honesty." **CJR**

To see all the "Blue" photos, go to www.carlcorey.com. To learn more about the project, go to www.facebook.com/BlueDocumentary.

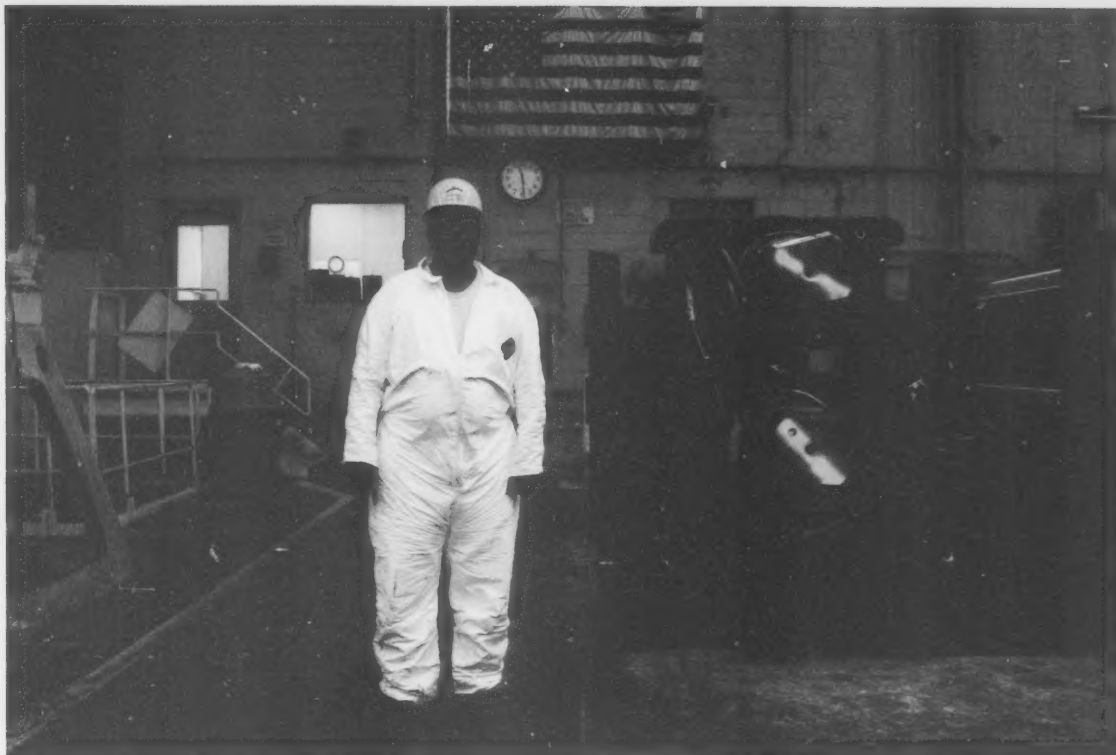
CARL COREY



Portrait #4177 Mike Schmitz, Welder, Amerequip; Kiel, WI

Portrait #4174 Kris Schad, Laser Operator, Amerequip; Kiel, WI





Portrait #4098 Larry Skruggs, Mechanical Tech, ArcelorMittal Steel; Cleveland, OH
Portrait #4026 Todd Kredovski, Machinist, Northern Engineering; Superior, WI

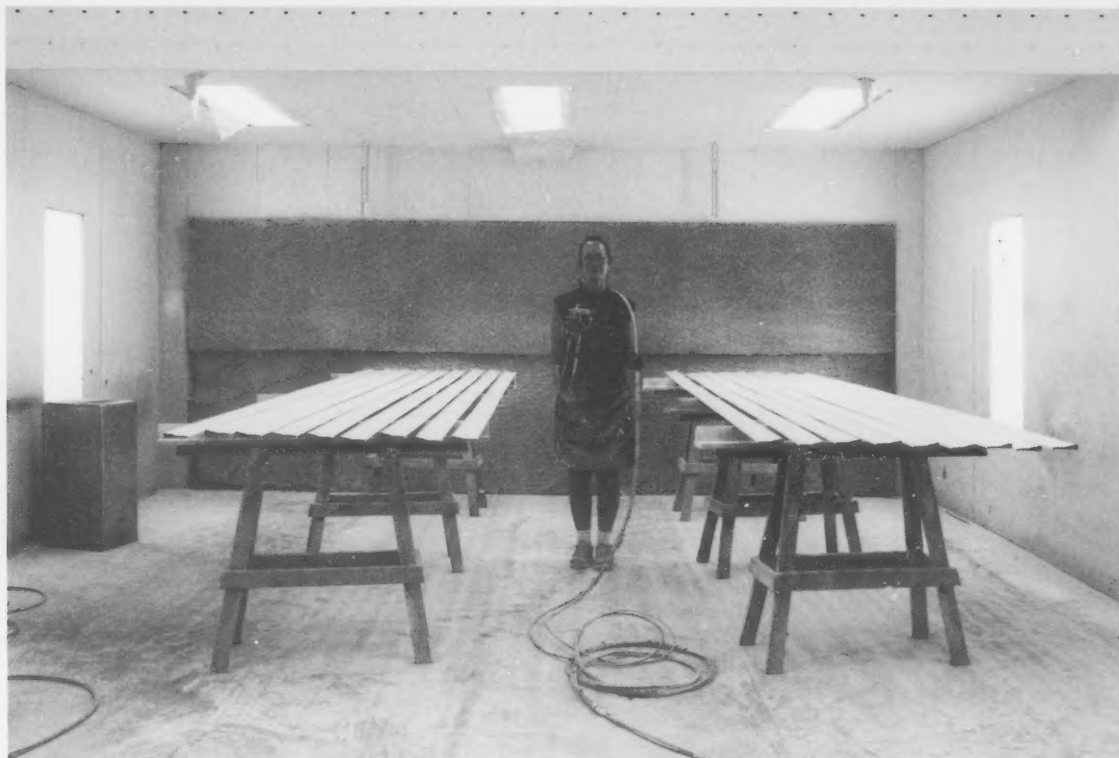




Portrait #4285 Charles McComas, Decorator, Homer Laughlin China; Newell, WV

Portrait #4180 David Checolinski, VP Operations, Precision Innovations; Germantown, WI





Portrait #4212 Lisa Ward, Finishing Room Coordinator, DeLeer's Millwork; Green Bay, WI
Portrait #4325 Carl Styers, Card Tender, Woolrich Mills; Woolrich, PA



Big talker

How a right-winger from Fargo became a star of the liberal airwaves

BY MICHAEL MEYER

Among highly paid primetime cable hosts who commute weekly by private jet between rural Minnesota and Manhattan, Ed Schultz is as close to a perennial underdog as you could find. Schultz, the star of *The Ed Show* on MSNBC and one of the most popular liberal hosts in talk radio, has a talent for taking embattled positions that, after much sweating and shouting, become ideal vehicles for his carefully cultivated image as the one liberal loud and mean enough to stand up for the working man. He's both revered and hated as the media's most outspoken champion of the beaten-down labor movement. And he first came to national prominence in 2004, when he began what is now a nearly decade-long struggle to reverse the fortunes of progressive talk radio, where the most popular liberal hosts air on fewer than 100 affiliates, while Rush Limbaugh, the right's top talker, is on 600.

One area where even Schultz can't cast himself as underdog, for the moment at least, is ratings. After briefly moving from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. in the primetime reshuffling that followed Keith Olbermann's parting ways with MSNBC in 2011, *The Ed Show* finally settled in at 8 p.m., and went on to have an impressive year in 2012. The "fat, red-headed guy from Fargo," as Schultz refers to himself, handily beat the more camera-friendly Anderson Cooper in that timeslot. And while it seems no one ever will top Fox's Bill O'Reilly, Schultz earned MSNBC its best 8 p.m. ratings among the coveted 25-to-54 demographic since 2009.

But even as Schultz's audience grows, he's beginning to look out of place in an MSNBC lineup that is increasingly the domain of a wonky, erudite liberalism that is about as far from Schultz's fired-up everyman persona as 30 Rock is from Fargo. MSNBC President Phil Griffin has been working to make the network's brand more recognizable and coherent, and Brian Stelter, who covers the television industry for *The New York Times*, reported in November that anonymous sources within MSNBC had told him Schultz might be kicked

out of primetime in favor of the *wunderkind* Ezra Klein. MSNBC denied it at the time, and when I recently suggested to Griffin that the MSNBC brand seemed to be moving away from Schultz, he disagreed: "I think we're always tinkering and evolving the brand. But I think Ed fits in there. And I think it's very important to have that voice talking about the issues the way Ed does."

Most likely, the contrast Schultz provides will remain popular with management for exactly as long as it remains popular with viewers, but a look at the heart of MSNBC primetime reveals an undeniable trend: At 10 p.m. there is Lawrence O'Donnell, a Harvard grad and former chief of staff of the Senate Finance Committee; Rachel Maddow, a former Rhodes Scholar who writes books with words like "unmooring" in the subtitle, is at 9 p.m.; and leading off is Schultz, a former NCAA Division II passing champion and owner of Big Eddie's North Country Lodge, which offers fishing vacation packages in northern Manitoba. MSNBC's weekend lineup, which the network considers a farm team for primetime, includes the decidedly un-Schultzian Chris Hayes and Melissa Harris-Perry, a professor of political science at Tulane.

It's enough to make you wonder how Schultz ended up here in the first place.

The grinder

There's one powerful interest group responsible for ensuring that Schultz has a live mic pointed at his mouth for four hours every weekday, and its name is Ed Schultz. He had help along the way, of course, including from some powerful entities (MSNBC and the Democratic Party chief among them) that felt they had something to gain by harnessing themselves to his ambition. But there certainly were more likely candidates for the job.

This out-of-nowhere quality has been a theme throughout Schultz's life. When he was a high school quarterback in



The man and his moment Schultz was always driven to, as a childhood friend put it, 'be somebody.' Now he is. Will it last?

Norfolk, VA, his singular focus was to become a professional football player—a long shot under the best of circumstances but especially so in Schultz's case. "He was not a natural athlete," a high school friend told *The Virginian-Pilot* in 2004, "but he was a grinder. He was real driven. He always had an idea he was going to be somebody, and he'd work as hard as it took to get there."

After winning the Division II passing title while quarterbacking for Minnesota State University Moorhead, Schultz fielded calls from NFL scouts and felt a pro career was imminent. But he would have to wait another 30 years before he made it to primetime. In his 2004 book, *Straight Talk from the Heartland*, Schultz called the NFL draft of 1978, which he watched with high hopes only to be passed over by every team, "the worst experience of my life." He later signed as a free agent with the Oakland Raiders and, after being cut, briefly played professionally in Canada before taking a final shot with the New York Jets. In 1979, he abandoned his gridiron dream without ever having played a down in the NFL.

Broadcasting was Schultz's backup plan. When he was a college quarterback, the sports journalists in Moorhead, MN, and Fargo, ND, which is right across the border, realized that Schultz was fairly articulate—a rare commodity on the football field—and encouraged him to someday give broadcasting a try. In the fall of 1979 he did, eventually landing at WDAY, a radio and TV news station in Fargo. As the voice of

North Dakota State University football and basketball, he became the most controversial play-by-play announcer in Fargo history, at one point screaming into a live mic before leaping from the broadcast booth to chase after a guy who had thrown a whiskey bottle at him. Over the next decade, as Schultz provided the soundtrack for a rotating cast of obscure college players, Rush Limbaugh was proving that conservative political talk-radio could be at least as entertaining and lucrative a blood sport as football.

Schultz, the guy who had no chance in the NFL but got there, sort of, anyway, was never going to be satisfied on the lower rungs of his new profession. He began to fill in as a talk-radio host on WDAY in 1988, the same year Limbaugh's show had its national premiere. By 1996, Schultz, now at crosstown rival KFGO, had established himself as the right-wing shock jock of the Great Plains. His favorite targets included the homeless ("how about getting a job?"), the unemployed ("freeloaders"), and farmers ("The American farmer's hat is bent from being stuck in the mailbox waiting for the government check").

What came next sounds a bit like the liberal talk-radio version of a superhero-creation myth. In 1998, just two years after starting his talk show, "News and Views," Schultz met a psychiatric nurse named Wendy Noack, who would become his second wife. Noack worked a second job running a homeless shelter for the city of Fargo, and insisted that Schultz

meet her at a soup kitchen on their first date. The experience of eating a baloney sandwich while surrounded by downtrodden men whom he was paid to lambast on the air rattled Schultz's conservative worldview, and he began what he describes as a period of soul-searching that lasted several years. During this time, he made multiple trips around his coverage area in a 38-foot RV dubbed "The Big Eddie Cruiser," visiting with struggling farmers and other members of America's underclass who were largely absent from media coverage during the tech boom of the '90s. Schultz emerged from this period a changed man.

"I don't think anyone wakes up one day and says 'I'm a liberal,'" Schultz admits. "But I underwent a number of grassroots experiences that brought me around to a different perspective."

Byron Dorgan, a North Dakota Democrat who retired from the US Senate in 2011, was a firsthand observer of Schultz's ideological drift, having been battered as a guest of the hostile, conservative Ed Schultz before later coming to know him as an ally. Dorgan was also a member of the Democratic leadership in the early aughts, a time when his party felt compelled to fight back against the right-wing talkers who dominated the national and local airwaves. This was the heart of the Bush era, and progressives were seething and on the defensive. The Republicans controlled the White House and Congress. Fox News was ascendant. Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, Laura Ingraham, Glenn Beck, and a seemingly endless number of local *doppelgängers* were collectively reaching tens of millions of listeners, and there was no liberal counterweight. Thomas Frank would soon publish *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, which solidified a thesis the Democrats deeply feared: As Frank put it, the American people were pissed off, and "the gravity of discontent pulls in only one direction: To the right, to the right, further to the right."

In late 2002, Dorgan invited Schultz to a luncheon at the Capitol building with numerous Senate Democrats, during which Schultz gave a report from the frontlines of talk radio in America and played the senators a clip that showcased his attack-dog style. That turned into a second meeting, in January 2003, that brought the senators together with every liberal talker they could scrounge up, about 25 in all, including Schultz. The second meeting was organized by Tom Athans, the co-founder of Democracy Radio, a nonprofit whose mission was to bring ideological balance to the nation's commercial radio outlets, and was meant to be a kind of audition to find that liberal counterweight to Limbaugh and the rest. Schultz treated it as exactly that.

"Ed just kind of took over the room," Dorgan says. "He gave them a kind of a locker-room halftime talk. It was inspiring and eye-opening to people who were there."

Schultz emerged with the blessing of many Senate Democrats, and it's easy to see why: Here was a loud white guy from the Midwest, a defector from the enemy camp who sounded a hell of a lot like all the successful conservative talkers, but with a different message. A man who was himself the embodiment (some might say a caricature) of the very type of voter the Democrats were losing. Schultz soon

'Aha, you bastards, I made it!' is how Schultz described his reaction to the growing success of his radio show.

became Athans's official choice to bring liberalism to the radio waves. Athans, who at the time was married to Senator Debbie Stabenow, received help from his wife and her Senate colleagues as he raised money from private donors to get Schultz's show into national syndication.

Democracy Radio's startup money covered the show's costs for a year, but it couldn't force radio stations to carry the program. For its national premiere in January 2004, *The Ed Schultz Radio Show* broadcast from exactly two stations: Langden, ND, and Needles, CA. "We had no phone calls for like two or three weeks," Schultz says. "We went to radio conventions and were laughed at."

His conservative tough-guy past was billed as his biggest selling point. Schultz's stock phrase, used at the top of his broadcasts, was that the audience was about to hear straight talk from a "gun-totin', red-meat-eatin' liberal." And there were times when the newly anointed voice of progressivism had a hard time sounding like it. According to a 2004 profile in the *Los Angeles Times*, Schultz was "prone to say things like: 'I'd like to see the president get all the illegals out of the country, so we can start all over again.'"

Despite the occasional bout of cognitive dissonance, the show eventually caught on in about 70 markets that first year.

A star is born

It is tempting to view everything Schultz does through the lens of football. In part this is because at heart, he is a natural athlete: a large-hearted exhibitionist who, having little interest in the vagaries of politics, operates on a field with clear allies and enemies, and thrives on the notion of a crowd rallying behind him. But part of it, too, is that Schultz often sounds like an ex-jock when he talks about himself and his career. "Aha, you bastards, I made it!" is how Schultz described his reaction to the growing success of his radio show. "It was that old jockstrap starting to come out again, you know? And I just had that fight and determination and belief that gritting the teeth and keeping going was winning for us."

His satisfaction was soon replaced by that familiar restlessness—that desire to, as his high-school friend had put it, "be somebody." Schultz's ambitions naturally turned to television. After a day of fulminating at the radio station in Fargo, he says he would return to his lakeside home in rural Minnesota and redirect his ire at the cable-news shows. "I just would scream at the TV set: 'Why can't I get a chance to do that?'"

In 2007, Schultz bought a \$150,000 satellite camera and

had it installed in the Fargo radio station. Now the playing field between the heartland and the coasts was a bit more level, and Schultz began appearing as a talking head on CNN, MSNBC, and Fox. "I had to make Ed Schultz a bigger brand if I was gonna do this," he says.

In the Democratic presidential primary in 2008, Schultz went early for Obama, a decision he attributes in part to having grown up in Virginia during the civil rights era. "I carried a lot of water for Obama," he says of his broadcasts during that time. "I pounded for him hard. I went after the Clintons. I went after every Democratic challenger."

He's convinced his support did not go unnoticed. After Obama won, Schultz put his name on the list to attend the first presidential press conference. He arrived at the event and learned that he had been assigned a seat in the front row, right next to Helen Thomas. "That was the Obama people saying thanks," he says. "I know it was. I know it was."

Phil Griffin was watching that press conference, and was surprised to see Big Eddie, who had pitched him to get on the network in the past, front and center. Griffin had his assistant set up a meeting in Georgetown, which, as he had with the Senate Democrats, Schultz turned into an audition. "I came out of that conversation pumped up about what Ed was saying and about what he could bring to the network," Griffin says. "I wanted a voice like that."

The Ed Show debuted in April 2009. In early meetings about the show, Schultz says he told MSNBC management, "I want to tell a story about what America needs. And what America needs right now is a voice for the middle class."

Throughout the first year of his show, Schultz brought his fire-breathing style to the debate over healthcare reform, hammering relentlessly for the public option and quickly establishing his progressive bona fides. Years later, his audience still remembers him for it. Every Schultz fan I talk to brings up healthcare—and Schultz's mother, who died of Alzheimer's, and his wife, whose battle with cancer Schultz discussed on the air. The personal connection people feel to the man is undeniable. As Schultz put it, in his industry "they've gotta like the talent."

During much of 2011, Schultz shifted his focus to the fight against the anti-collective bargaining legislation proposed by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker as a way to balance the state's budget. Schultz frequently broadcast live from the protests in Madison. It was a watershed moment for the labor movement, for both political parties, and for Schultz and MSNBC. Sure, the network had Rachel Maddow and a growing backbench from the Ivy League. But here was Ed Schultz doing exactly what Ed Schultz was meant to do, handing his megaphone to the voice of the liberal street, so to speak.

One broadcast stands out. In it, Schultz, bundled against the February Wisconsin cold, struts in front of a crowd of shouting protestors and delivers a rant, not against Scott Walker or the Koch brothers (the conservative billionaires who helped get Walker elected), but against Rush Limbaugh, the man who helped inspire him to abandon sports for politics.

After playing a clip of Limbaugh calling the Wisconsin protestors "freeloaders," Schultz unloads on the right-wing

talkers: "If you want to follow the Limbaughs and the Becks of the world, and you want to turn your back on firefighters, turn your back on police officers, turn your back on nurses, turn your back on brothers and sisters who have stood in solidarity to fight for the middle class in America? Is that wrapping yourself in the flag? Hey Rush, why don't you wrap your fat ass in the flag on Monday?"

The crowd roared.

Like much of Schultz's work, this segment was more symbolism than specifics. (The speech was largely about firefighters, who, though outspoken among the protestors, were exempt from Governor Walker's collective-bargaining proposal.) And in its obsession with Schultz's media rivals, the rant was at least as much about Schultz as it was about the Wisconsin workers. But Schultz went on to interview a number of protestors, something that consistently separated him from others in the MSNBC primetime lineup during this long-running story. Most of cable-news talk is, of course, a multibillion-dollar vehicle for the personality and opinions of the hosts. Say what you will about Schultz, he is one of the very few hosts who consistently puts a microphone in front of Americans who aren't currently employed as political operatives, and he is at his best when he does so.

The *Times's* Brian Stelter says, "Seeing Ed Schultz on television makes a viewer think, 'Wow. Where are the other guys like him?' I personally didn't recognize the dearth of labor coverage presented from a pro-labor point of view until Ed started doing it on television."

At the same time, Stelter continues, "When MSNBC talks about its brand, it talks about Rachel Maddow and Lawrence O'Donnell and Chris Hayes. It doesn't talk as often about Ed Schultz."

It's arguable that, just as the Democrats viewed Schultz as the right man for the job during the heart of the Bush years, MSNBC is beginning to view others as a better fit in the age of Obama. Schultz's bombast, which resembles the Fox News style of the 2000s, was once the hallmark of opinionated cable news. But now, perhaps, MSNBC sees a different way forward, and is building a lineup in the sober, technocrat image of the current administration.

If the prospect of this troubles Schultz, he isn't saying. For the first time in his life, Ed Schultz feels he has no higher plane to reach. He's finally gotten to play those big-league downs he aspired to since high school.

Sitting with Schultz in his radio studio in 30 Rock, a small room along one of the building's long hallways, I asked him what, in a career marked by a constant restlessness—for more airtime, more audience, more money, another medium, a bigger impact—he hoped to do next. "I want to have a show that's the best it can be at eight o'clock," he said. "After this, what else is there? There aren't many people who get to this level."

And then the intro music kicked in, signaling the end of the commercial break, and Big Eddie turned back to the mic. **CJR**

MICHAEL MEYER is a CJR staff writer who runs the Guide to Online News Startups database at CJR.org.



Man with a plan Steven Newhouse says he's confident the changes will give local journalism a 'vital future' in Advance newsrooms.

The battle of New Orleans

Is Advance Publications securing the future of local news—or sacrificing it?

BY RYAN CHITTUM

In May, as the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* put to bed an epic, eight-part investigation into Louisiana's prison system, its editors began to disappear. First, Mark Lorando, the features editor, was nowhere to be found. Then the chairs of the online editor, Lynn Cunningham, and the sports editor, Doug Tatum, were empty. So was that of the city editor, Gordon Russell. Newsroom wags called it The Rapture.

Conspicuously left behind: Peter Kovacs and Dan Shea, managing editors for news, whose subordinates, sworn to secrecy, hadn't told them what was up. As Kovacs, Shea, and a team of 20 put final touches on the series, "Louisiana Incarcerated," the chosen editors—including Jim Amoss, the top editor—were two miles away in the Place St. Charles tower, implementing a plan that would make a story like that series far more difficult to pull off in the future.

The secret meetings in May led to a bloodletting in June. Advance Publications laid off nearly half the paper's newsroom, halted daily publication of the *Picayune*, and implemented a business and news model that shifts the focus of the operation to its free news website, NOLA.com.

Ten months later, a battle still rages for the soul of the *Times-Picayune*, and over the meaning of what happened. Much of the media coverage of the changes in New Orleans, while critical of Advance and the paper's leaders, has focused on the decision to cut publication to three days a week and, to a lesser extent, on the layoffs, which were devastating even by today's standards. Those are, of course, important storylines.

Less examined: the radical change in how journalism is done at the 176-year-old *Times-Picayune* and what that means for the future of news coverage. And even less examined are the strange finances of the move, which help explain what to many appears inexplicable, from either a journalistic or a business point of view.

Advance argues that it is taking a difficult but bold step into a digital future, in New Orleans and across the country.

But its actions make more sense with a close look at the numbers, which suggest something other than its claim of "securing a vital future for our local journalism."

AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE LOST MORE THAN HALF their advertising dollars in the last five years, an existential threat to an industry that in 2007 depended on ads for three-fourths of its revenue. The *Times-Picayune* is no exception to the trend. Its advertising has plunged 42 percent since 2009, according to an analysis of figures its publisher gave *The Wall Street Journal* in September.

There is no sure answer for what to do about this. Still, by now, most major newspapers have begun moving to strategies that play to their strengths: charging core readers online while allowing casual visitors 10 or so free stories a month; increasing the price of the paper, sometimes by charging an upsell fee for bundling digital access with print; shoring up Sunday circulation; and attempting to convert ad departments into marketing-services operations that provide more holistic solutions to local promotion, like website creation, social-media help, app creation, and the like. These and similar strategies are based on the value of the content, and on a hopeful bet that newspapers can keep significant subscription revenue in the coming all-digital future.

Advance is following the industry into marketing services. But mainly it has stuck by what was conventional Web wisdom from before the recession—chasing clicks. In the new NOLA model, editors push reporters to increase "inventory," more content with fewer journalists. And more of its remaining resources are in sports and entertainment. In this system, a distracted click on a story that says, in its entirety, "Hornets officially announce their nickname will be changing from Hornets to Pelicans," is worth as much as one on, say, a prison exposé. More, actually, since the former comes with less time and effort.

If you worked for Advance Publications, you might

have seen this coming. In 2009, Advance shut down the 174-year-old *Ann Arbor News* and replaced it with a website, a buzzword-driven news agenda, and a biweekly newspaper called *AnnArbor.com*. It fired roughly half of the newsroom, partially repopulating it with fresh-faced journalists with job titles like "Sports Reporter—Buzz." Reporters churn out three or four posts per day.

By most accounts in Ann Arbor, its journalism deteriorated dramatically, but Advance declared *AnnArbor.com* a success, financially and journalisticly. In 2012, it moved all its Michigan papers to a version of the model, centralizing functions like sports and statehouse coverage and slashing newsrooms and pressrooms. *Times-Picayune* staffers watched with unease, but figured New Orleans, with its devoted print readers, would be last among the Newhouse papers to get the Michigan model, if it got it at all.

And if anything was broken at the *Times-Picayune*, it wasn't the newsroom. The paper covered its metro area as well as any in the country, a mix of broad daily coverage and ambitious enterprise reporting that effected change, despite a news staff already down roughly a third from the 270 it employed before Hurricane Katrina. It could be counted on to unearth the foibles and corruption of local politicians, cover the Saints and Uptown social events like a blanket, and capture poignant photographs like one that ran in May of a five-year-old girl, shot in the abdomen at a birthday party, dying in her father's arms. It produced stellar investigative work, too, like Cindy Chang's prison series, which exposed the perverse financial incentives behind Louisiana's bloated penal system. Readers rewarded such coverage: The *Times-Picayune* had the highest market penetration of any major US daily.

Nonetheless, on May 23, word came that Advance was bringing the Michigan model to New Orleans—ending daily publication of the paper and firing much of the staff. *NOLA.com* had already introduced a redesign, on May 8, based on the original Michigan template, down to its garish yellow color scheme and what its creators call a "river of news," a blog-style rollout of stories. It had been hooted out of town. The colors were subsequently toned down and the river of news downplayed, beneath editor-picked stories.

As in Michigan, the newsroom would be partly repopulated by younger digital natives who could be paid much less—as *NOLA Media Group* reporters, not *Times-Picayune* reporters. They would be told to write search-engine-optimized posts for the Web multiple times a day, and not to worry about print deadlines. Editing would be deemphasized. "Curators" on the newspaper side would pick stories off of *NOLA.com* and put together a print newspaper on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. This in a city that worships its habits and traditions.

Editor Amoss told his staff that the new *NOLA.com* would be a "website emphasizing sports and entertainment." The new publisher, Ricky Mathews, handed out talking points for managers that said, "*NOLA Media Group* will ... position us to better serve our readers, advertisers, and business partners," and that "the course we have chosen for New Orleans is tailored to the needs of this market."

Advance Publications' news websites have long been laughingstocks in the industry.

But as many loudly pointed out, New Orleans is one of the poorest and least digitally advanced cities in America. More than a third of its residents have no Internet access at home. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of its population read the daily at least once a week. By 8 a.m. the morning after the news broke, Anne Milling, an Uptown philanthropist and longtime member of the *Times-Picayune's* citizens' advisory board, had bought *savethepicayune.org* and kicked off a fierce citywide protest. Tom Benson, a local who owns the Saints and the Hornets, would offer to buy the paper, as would another "serious player," according to Milling. "We could have saved the *Picayune*, we could have continued it as a daily, we could have done a lot of things, and the community would have rallied," she says. "But they refused."

"They" were Advance's owners, the Newhouse family. "We have no intention of selling," Steven Newhouse told *The New York Times* on June 12. "No matter how much noise there is out there."

Meanwhile, the bloodletting had begun. Earlier that day, a young business reporter, Richard Thompson, went into his early-morning meeting with the city editor, Gordon Russell, carrying a bottle of Crown Royal and a family photo. He offered Russell a drink. When the editor declined, Thompson poured himself a shot and turned the picture to face his boss, saying, "Gordon, what do you want to talk about?"

"I like your style," Russell said, then laid Thompson off (he would later be essentially unfired after more people quit than higher-ups had counted on). Then he called in the next reporter. But Russell took no pleasure in it. "By the time I came in, he was pummeled," Bruce Nolan, a 41-year *Times-Picayune* veteran, says of Russell. "He was beaten up. He was very sorry; he was remorseful. He said, 'This is a terrible thing; I'm sorry this is happening to you. You know how much I love you.' We both understood we were being carried along by forces bigger than both of us."

"And I came out, and I walked through a corridor and into the newsroom, where everyone is standing around. It's a death march. Every face turns to me, and I draw my finger across my throat. It was stunning."

On June 19, fearing an evisceration of the paper's culture, 17 of the paper's remaining top reporters—all of whom had been offered jobs with the new *NOLA Media Group*—signed a memo to Amoss and Mark Lorando, who would effectively become the new managing editor, and Lynn Cunningham, the online editor (who has since retired). They had simple questions: "Will there be goals or quotas for tasks such as blog posting, activity on Twitter, and entering comment

streams? Will there be opportunities for producing enterprise stories, and if so, how will they be determined?"

They got no reply. Most of them would soon leave, too. Cindy Chang, the force behind the prison series, took a job at the *Los Angeles Times*. "Even though they continued to pay lip service to great journalism," she said, "you could also see the direction they were going."

THE NEW ORLEANS OVERHAUL IS PART OF A BROAD INITIATIVE by the Newhouse family, which, through its closely held Advance Publications, recently rolled out the Michigan model at its papers in Alabama, Pennsylvania, and New York. Next, presumably, are the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, the Portland *Oregonian*, and the Newark *Star-Ledger*—all, like the *Times-Picayune*, imperfect institutions that over the years have nonetheless been the news lifelines of their regions. Union officials in Cleveland have already gotten word that they'll lose 58 people this year, a third of the news staff.

Neither Steven Newhouse nor Ricky Mathews responded to repeated requests for comment from CJR. Most of the current and former *Times-Picayune* journalists interviewed for this story declined to comment on the record for fear of retribution. (In the case of the former employees, it was because of non-disparagement agreements that Advance required they sign in exchange for severance packages.)

But in a Poynter blog post in August, Steven Newhouse cast the changes at the *Times-Picayune* as a part of a "Great Leap Forward" in newspapering: a necessary, if painful, reordering of news organizations meant to take full advantage of digital technologies while bowing to grim economic realities:

The changes we have made in Michigan have strengthened our confidence that we can secure a vital future for our local journalism elsewhere. While we believe that our print revenue will decline further, we are hopeful that our increased focus on digital will allow digital revenue to become an even greater revenue growth engine, and, eventually, turn our local companies into growth businesses once more, allowing them to continue to serve their communities with the quality of journalism that readers expect.

Media analysts have responded mostly with puzzlement. While everyone agrees on the general problem, the Newhouse family is suddenly almost alone among newspaper chains in continuing to insist on the free model for news and an intentional acceleration of print's demise. "The business case is not all that strong," mused Poynter's Rick Edmonds over the summer. Ken Doctor, the news industry analyst and consultant, wrote that "It's near impossible to see how this is a growth strategy for the T-P's (and the city's) future."

Because Advance is a closely held firm—and a secretive one—it is difficult to get numbers. But a rough estimate based on CJR analysis and reporting puts the combined entities' annual revenue at about \$90 million and operating profit at \$9 million, both of which come overwhelmingly from the print side. Data from Kantar Media indicates that the *Times-Picayune* brought in \$64.7 million in print ads in 2011, while NOLA.com brought in \$5.7 million, according to *Advertising Age*. Considering circulation revenue of roughly

\$25 million to \$30 million, based on CJR estimates, the print paper brought in more than 90 percent of the company's revenue before the changes, and still likely brings in five of every six dollars in revenue. If NOLA Media Group were a standalone business with no newspaper to support it, its costs would exceed its revenue by many times.

In the near term, Newhouse's idea to shrink the print product makes perfect business sense. It still gets revenue from three fat papers—Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday—even if readers are alienated by the loss of less profitable Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday editions. And by laying off 200 employees—journalists, salespeople, pressmen, and delivery drivers—and sharply reducing what it pays for paper and ink, Advance may have doubled its operating profit in New Orleans. Doctor estimates that the moves gave the *Times-Picayune* a one-time boost of 11 percentage points in profit margin.

But that's the near term.

Long-term, everyone agrees that print is in decline. But the digital side is still far from self-sustaining, more than 15 years into its existence, and it faces long odds to ever, on its own, support a newsroom of the sort required to cover New Orleans thoroughly. NOLA.com would have to quadruple or quintuple its 2011 revenue to support its current size.

And digital ad rates continue to fall.

JIM AMOSS DENIES THAT THE NEWSROOM HAS BEEN GUTTED, saying that it has been reduced from 181 in May to 155 today. But the current number is inflated by the inclusion of new part-time high-school sports contributors, according to newsroom sources. On an apples-to-apples basis, the newsroom is down into the 130s.

At the same time, the mix of jobs has moved away from news toward sports and entertainment, which have grown significantly since the layoffs. News staffing has declined, according to people familiar with the matter, in large part because of reduced coverage of the suburbs (Amoss disputes this). And several of the new hires have the title of "community-engagement specialist," a quasi-marketing position that seems mostly to entail asking readers to comment on posts like "Are you a Bieber Believer? Did Justin's Tuesday night concert rock your world?"

The newsroom is still led by Amoss, who says, "I think fundamentally, newspapers right now are choosing between remaining as they are and hoping that somehow things will turn around, or restructuring radically in order to have a long-term future.

"When I say that I think that our owners have invested, I mean that they chose the second path. All the evidence points to—and this is why I decided to stay, by the way—their wanting to stay in business long-term, and figure out in an intellectually rigorous way how to do so."

Advance has certainly put money into the operation in the form of new offices. On the top two floors of a 32-story tower, in some of the most prestigious office space in the city, NOLA Media Group has tried to shake off the industrial era and capture a sort of Silicon Valley cachet (observers are watching whether the company goes after lucrative

Louisiana digital-startup tax credits). To get to what used to be called the *Times-Picayune*, go to the French Quarter and head to the Shops at Canal Place. Take an elevator down, walk past J. Crew and Anthropologie, dodge the shoppers, and hop on another elevator that goes up, past the floor with the Panda Garden knock-off, to the offices of NOLA Media Group. "I work at the mall for a website," says one reporter. The publisher, Ricky Mathews, has spoken of his desire to create a "Google-Nike kind of vibe." By design, there aren't enough of the sleek desks for everyone, so reporters are told to not bring in personal effects. They're encouraged to do "backpack journalism" from coffee shops and their homes.

"When you put all sections of the newsroom and the website together in one room in downtown New Orleans that's equipped in a way to foster collaboration," Amoss says, "it's just amazing that it actually does that in a way that's both, in our case, unprecedented and was unforeseen—by me, at least. It makes people think about what they're doing minute by minute, hour by hour, in a way that being in a legacy newsroom, where you have been for decades, and where you're cheek-by-jowl with the printing press, doesn't. It's just a psychological difference that's interesting to observe."

Newspapers have been integrating their Web and print staffs for years, though, and NOLA has swapped one form of segregation for another: The staff that cobbles together the printed paper remains at the old Howard Avenue headquarters. The *Times-Picayune's* three weekly print editions are thick with news and advertising. The Wednesday paper would be a Sunday paper in most cities. And the *Times-Picayune*, when it's there, is still pretty good—if noticeably diminished—compared to similar-sized operations, a testament to the skills of those who remain, and to Amoss. "The reality is that all the people who are still sitting here are committed to putting out a quality product and are committed to make this thing work," says Mark Schleifstein, one of the few top reporters who stayed on. "They don't know how that's going to happen, and they want a voice in making that happen."

"A lot of younger reporters are getting their chance to play in the big game," says another current T-P reporter. "It freshens up the ranks. If it wasn't so depressing, it would be exciting."

But despite its physical heft, coverage looks thin at times. Incomplete versions of stories have ended up in the paper, including one on BP's criminal fines in the Deepwater Horizon disaster, as writethroughs posted to NOLA.com went unnoticed by the print "curators." If you read NOLA.com, you get an unsettling sense of déjà vu, seeing stories you saw online elsewhere days earlier. That happens even if you don't read NOLA.com. "I saw one recent front page of the *Picayune* where three of the stories were already in *The [Baton Rouge] Advocate*," says Steve Beatty, editor of the nonprofit local news startup, The Lens, and a former *Times-Picayune* journalist.

As the old structure disintegrates, some staffers say, the quality of the report is deteriorating. The planning required for medium- to long-term projects is mostly gone. With fewer editors available, stories that should be 10 or 15 inches balloon to 30 online.

In fact, reporters say they often file without any editor seeing their copy. They're told to write two-sentence ledes

because someone up the chain at NOLA got the idea that Google's algorithm favors them. ("It's a secret that only we're in on," says a sarcastic reporter.) After Hurricane Isaac in August, one top editor bemoaned the clicks NOLA.com had lost to outlets that called it a hurricane while it was still a tropical storm, arguing that NOLA.com should have matched the inaccuracy rather than lose search-engine points.

In January, imitating an infamous Huffington Post piece, NOLA.com ran a brief post headlined "When is Super Bowl 2013" to draw cheap search-engine clicks. But showing how the organization doesn't quite get the game, it tweeted the post, too, effectively spamming its followers with SEO detritus meant only for Google spiders.

The larger question, always difficult to answer, is what's not being covered. "Stories where people of poverty talk about issues of importance seem almost nonexistent these days," says Katy Reckdahl, who focused on those issues before she was laid off in September. "There is no regular female news columnist, now that Stephanie Grace is gone."

The Baton Rouge bureau, under the purview of James O'Byrne, the former NOLA.com editor, is widely viewed internally as an embarrassment. The second sentence of one November story's lede would be hard to imagine in a high-school paper: "Fortunately for the citizens of the Red Stick, local law enforcement continue to team up with state legislators and federal agencies to ensure stricter drug enforcement laws and regulations make it onto the books."

As Bobby Jindal kicked off his presumed presidential campaign in the days after Obama won re-election, the *Picayune* failed to get a story out for weeks. When the bureau posted a piece on that topic on NOLA.com, insiders say that editors thought it was so bad, they yanked it from the site (Amoss denies this). The version up today is still fairly weak, particularly when compared to the sophisticated cover story that the local alternative paper, *Gambit*, ran on Jindal's bid two weeks earlier. That piece was written by Stephanie Grace, the ex-*Picayune* columnist.

Amoss, a native of New Orleans—and once an immensely respected if emotionally distant leader—is now viewed with decidedly mixed feelings by both current and former reporters. The most generous among them say they believe he stayed on to fight to preserve as much of the news culture as he could. "He's the captain that decided to go down with the ship," says a reporter still in the newsroom. "He's a thinker. He's not a business guy. He's doing the best with what he's got."

THE IRONY OF ADVANCE'S BIG DIGITAL PUSH IS THAT THE company has been behind the digital curve for so long, and still is. In the late 1990s, in the first few years of the Web's exponential expansion, Advance formed a separate company to create and control its newspaper websites. Advance Digital, as it is called, imposed a cookie-cutter design on the 32 papers in the chain, in an attempt to find economies of scale. It would be one thing if this template were well done; it is not. Advance's news websites have long been laughingstocks in the industry, famously difficult to navigate, much less look at, "a cross between a dusty phonebook and The Internets circa 1999," as *The Atlantic Wire* wrote in July, about NOLA.com.

This looks more like an orderly liquidation than a Great Leap Forward, as Newhouse has suggested.

In a town rich in history and its own peculiarities, NOLA.com seems like an out-of-town visitor. The site made cosmetic and structural changes in May and June after a wave of complaints, but is still an ugly mess—challenging to navigate, with corrections that aren't flagged when fixes are made. Few of the pleasures of the print *Times-Picayune* come across on NOLA.com. But the problems aren't just cosmetic.

THE NEWHOUSES, ALONG WITH THEIR EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS, framed their move as investments in the future. But it's a clear disinvestment in New Orleans. And compared with decisions by other owners, it looks like an unnecessary and premature surrender of the qualities that make newsrooms worth having—and saving.

And there are contrasting visions of a digital future. Consider the *Orange County Register*, a similar-sized paper that was purchased by the Aaron Kushner-controlled Freedom Communications in June. Kushner boosted print pages by 40 percent and added a new business section. He's installing a metered paywall, raising print prices, and even improving the paper stock. Most important, he has gone on a hiring spree, expanding the newsroom by 50 percent, from 180 to 270. "Aaron Kushner is the anti-Advance," writes Ken Doctor. "It's been widely reported as a print-first strategy. I think that mischaracterizes it, though print is getting well funded. It's a reader-first strategy, and a wily one that aims at doing the right things in the right order, with capital to match."

Kushner's idea is that newspapers can't cut their way to survival, let alone prosperity, particularly when almost all metro newspapers are already thin imitations of their former selves. Diminishing your journalism means chasing away readers and advertisers who have paid you good money.

Kushner ended the futile pageview chase the *Register* had been on for years, just as the *Picayune* joined it in earnest. Most of the *Register's* 40-some blogs have been shuttered with a note that reads, "You may have already noticed a few changes to our website as we shift our focus to more quality, informative content. With these changes, we are saying goodbye to a few of our blogs, including this one." The old regime gave reporters Web quotas. That, too, is gone.

Other publishers have different strategies, not as radical as Kushner's but nonetheless drawing on the strengths of newspaper journalism. *The New York Times* has preserved the size of its dominant newsroom at the expense of its profit margins, and devised a digital-subscription model that others in the industry are emulating. As a result, last year the *Times's* revenue was up for the first time in six years, despite continued print-advertising declines.

The Naples Daily News, an EW Scripps paper in Florida, has increased revenue each of the last two years by reinventing its ad-sales department and increasing its print circulation. Even Gannett has gotten results from its new strategy to raise circulation revenue (a metered paywall and a print price increase). Its publishing division saw revenue increase 4 percent in the fourth quarter, though it was helped by an extra week in the period.

In New Orleans, the internal and external backlash against the new model has delayed or moderated some of Advance's plans. In December, editors disappeared again for another meeting, in which the dreaded Web-production quotas were discussed. Virtually all of the news desk—including most of the new hires—signed a letter to the top editors—Amoss, Lorando, and Lynn Cunningham—protesting the idea of quotas and seeking a meeting.

The editors were taken aback, and quickly told reporters that the quotas were mere "goals," not something set in stone. Few believed it, particularly now that the newsroom employs a Staff Performance Measurement and Development Specialist and incentive pay might be introduced next year. Lorando has told staffers that accomplishing the goals could mean roughly three to five posts a day. Of the emphasis on quantity, one reporter says, "We were given certain assurances that it wouldn't get to this point. I just don't like going in there anymore."

Meanwhile, the *Picayune* has opened its print money-maker up to competition. *The Advocate* in Baton Rouge launched a barebones startup in New Orleans, a much bigger market 80 miles to its southeast, and scooped up 23,500 paying readers in its first three months.

It's hard to imagine a lucrative future for NOLA.com once the print edition inevitably slides into the red. But consider this: If they sold the paper right now, the Newhouses probably would get less than \$40 million for it, based on the earnings multiples of recent newspaper sales. By radically slashing costs, as they have done—perhaps by as much as \$25 million—the company can earn that amount in a couple of years thanks to higher profit margins. Anything beyond that is gravy.

This looks like an orderly liquidation. By cutting costs well ahead of perpetually declining revenues from the "Inkosaur," as James O'Byrne calls the print edition, the Newhouses can ride the *Times-Picayune* down profitably while minimizing the loss of money. Once the paper reaches terminal velocity, they can shut down Advance Central Services, the print wing, tie up any potential liabilities from the paper, and pitch them into the Mississippi.

If NOLA Media Group is able to turn a profit on its own by then, probably with a dramatically lower headcount than its newsroom has even now, so be it. But it will never amount to much as a business. Not to a family worth at least \$14 billion. And not to serious readers, either, who likely will have long ago floated off the river of content. By then, a system that so clearly emphasizes quantity over quality will have taken its toll. And not just in New Orleans. **CJR**

RYAN CHITTUM writes for *The Audit*, CJR's business desk.



Changing of the guard Mikhail Gorbachev (left) and Andrei Gromyko on Moscow's Red Square



Ideas + Reviews

SECOND LOOK

Gorky peek

The Second Russian Revolution gave viewers an unprecedented glimpse inside a rapidly liberalizing Soviet Union

BY ANN COOPER

In the spring of 1989, after decades of being kept out in the cold by Communist secrecy and propaganda, journalists in Moscow were given unprecedented access to a Kremlin building—the boxy, modernistic Palace of Congresses. Inside the palace, the Soviet Union was taking its first cautious steps toward democracy. An unlikely mix of Communist bosses, nationalist firebrands, teachers, and ordinary laborers, among others—all chosen in what were often described as the country's first “quasi-democratic elections”—had come together to serve in a new legislature, the Congress of People's Deputies.

Their deliberations were open to the Moscow press corps, and, in the frequent breaks during sessions of the new Congress, journalists could roam the palace's vast lobbies, where it was possible to corner Andrei Sakharov, listen to the pontifications of Boris Yeltsin, and even, on occasion, probe the thoughts of Mikhail Gorbachev or his fellow Politburo members Yegor Ligachev and Alexander Yakovlev, the political yin and yang of the Communist leadership.

What a feast for access-starved journalists, who, in the pre-Gorbachev era, could waste weeks or months seeking meetings with even the most low-level officials. I was National Public Radio's Moscow bureau chief at the time, and along with my colleagues, I enjoyed the improved access we had largely thanks to Gorbachev and his policy of glasnost, or transparency. Our editors hungered for details on everything—independence movements, agitators for multiparty politics and a market economy, profiles of those Politburo players who still resisted radical change. We filed constantly, working to bring sense to huge, historic events.

In London, a journalist named Brian Lapping watched all this unfold as he looked for his next video project. There was little that tied him to the Gorbachev story beyond the fact that Lapping's father was Russian (he had left the country as a child after the 1917 revolution). Lapping himself didn't speak Russian and hadn't reported on the Soviet Union.

What Lapping could boast on his résumé, though, was an acclaimed Granada Television project called *End of Empire*—a 14-hour documentary made in 1985 (and broadcast on Britain's News Channel 4), in one of Lapping's earliest video partnerships with a young American producer named Norma Percy.

End of Empire chronicled the last days of British rule around the globe, through the remarkably candid reminiscences of both colonizers and the colonized. After *Empire*, Lapping founded his own video production company, whose proposals got serious attention in part because of *Empire*'s success.

When Lapping and Percy pitched *The Second Russian Revolution* to BBC2, they proposed applying the same techniques—long, detailed interviews with the top Soviet decision makers—to tell the story of key moments in the Gorbachev era. The *Russian Revolution* project would differ from *Empire* in some important ways. The British story was already history when that project began, but in the Soviet Union, they would be covering history-in-the-making, its final outcome uncertain. And to tell the intimate stories Lapping and Percy wanted would require getting interviews with leaders of what had been one of the most secretive societies of the 20th century. “I think I had no good reason for thinking that we could succeed,” says Lapping. “I pretended to a degree of confidence that I didn’t really have.”

Like the rest of us reporting there at the time, Lapping and Percy benefited from glasnost. But the astonishing access they got and the insightful interviews they recorded for *The Second Russian Revolution* were more than just good timing. They were the fruits of intrepid journalism, the kind that Lapping and Percy have since applied to other great moments in recent history—the fall of Yugoslavia, the Watergate scandal, the collapse of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Their documentaries, including *The Second Russian Revolution*, have won bushels of awards and stand as examples of the best of their genre.

The BBC aired *The Second Russian Revolution* in the summer of 1991, just before hardliners attempted to overthrow Gorbachev that August. The timing was extraordinary, the analysis prescient. Viewed today, it’s a poignant record of an epic struggle over a central question that informed so many of those decisions: Who has the right to control news and information? In 1991, when *The Second Russian Revolution* ends, that struggle had been won largely by the champions of free speech. But, as we see now, in the speech-constricted era of Vladimir Putin, it was not a permanent victory.

The technique

Whole books and journalism courses are devoted to the art of the interview,

While the interviewers’ questions are rarely heard, the responses they elicit are often memorable in their candor, detail, and pathos.

journalism’s master key to unlocking secrets and revealing personalities. “How not to” examples abound, perhaps most famously Barbara Walters’s much-lamponed query to Katharine Hepburn in 1981, “What kind of a tree are you?” We all remember the question; the response was barely noted.

In the documentaries of Brian Lapping and Norma Percy, the interviewer’s questions are rarely heard, but the responses are often memorable in their candor, their detail—and sometimes their pathos.

Here is a sample, from part three of *The Second Russian Revolution*, when Mikhail Poltoranin, an adviser to Boris Yeltsin, recalls a closed-door meeting of Moscow party officials in 1987. The party had gathered to formally accept the resignation of Yeltsin as the city’s Communist boss, and many gleefully seized the opportunity to kick the (temporarily) disgraced Yeltsin while he was down.

Poltoranin:

It was a horrific scene. It lasted over four hours. I was sitting across from Gorbachev. I was in the fourth row. I couldn’t get any closer. I watched his face get redder and redder. His eyes were darting all round the hall.

Finally, says Poltoranin:

Then the lynching was over. The last speeches had been made, and the crowd was leaving. Many of them had the look of victory on their shining faces. Yeltsin was slumped over the table, his head in his hands. They were all walking out. Gorbachev looked back from the doorway and saw Yeltsin. He went back, took his arm, and helped him out of the hall.

I asked Percy how the documentary team elicited these fly-on-the-wall accounts from men who worked in a system that for decades had treated vital public information as its private secrets.

Percy’s formula: Learn all you can

in advance about the event you want to discuss. Skip generalities or anything too open-ended (“Who’s the most interesting person you ever met?” is a Percy no-no). Focus on specific moments and the tiniest of details to tell the larger story. (“I was in the fourth row,” Poltoranin begins, perhaps because he’s just been asked exactly where he sat. But he quickly moves from seating arrangements to the Shakespearean tragedy that ends with Gorbachev supporting the battered Yeltsin’s exit.)

Oren Jacoby, at the time a young filmmaker whose Russian studies at Brown University helped him get a gig working on the *Revolution* series, recalls Percy’s suggestions for how to interview the Soviet officials: get them to provide physical details, like where they were sitting when the phone rang. The goal: to give viewers “the feeling that you were there while history was being made,” says Jacoby.

There’s almost no detail too small for the Lapping-Percy team. In an interview with Nikolai Ryzhkov, whom Gorbachev promoted early on to deal with the stagnant Soviet economy, Ryzhkov describes being in Gorbachev’s office with masses of documents that revealed the country’s true economic state:

We spread them all over the floor. We took our jackets off and picked our way through the papers: “This one’s interesting.... This is useful.... That one’s no good!” We felt we were really doing things. You couldn’t see the carpet for documents.

It was the early, giddy days of Gorbachev’s tenure, when the documents spread on the floor could become ammunition in a war to reform the decaying socialist system. After the documents session, we see Gorbachev lambasting party officials in Leningrad, revealing the dirty little secret about the centralized Soviet economy: It was collapsing. “Your technology is hopeless,”

Gorbachev tells the stunned audience in Leningrad. "Productivity is low and the quality of goods unacceptable." There's a tongue-lashing for Soviet economists, too. "We've not been getting our sums right, comrades," he says. Information, in this case dismal economic figures, was the weapon Gorbachev needed to push for change.

The Soviet journalists

In that early glasnost period, it was possible as a foreign correspondent to file stories from Moscow nearly every day about freshly revealed information: data on past political executions, new reports on economic decline, investigations of political corruption. Among our sources were reform-minded Soviet journalists, some of whom made a remarkable transition from propaganda to accountability journalism.

The shift began in 1986, after the explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear-power plant in the Soviet republic of Ukraine. For three days, a radioactive fire burned out of control, but, as *The Second Russian Revolution* reminds us, "not a single word about the accident appeared in any newspaper, nor on radio, nor on television."

Gorbachev was in power by then. So was the liberal Alexander Yakovlev, the Politburo member in charge of party propaganda, who explains the party leaders' silence for the BBC team.

There was no ban [on reporting the accident] as such. But we didn't know what to say. We were afraid. Would we cause needless panic?

It's possible to think, fleetingly, that the earnest, sympathetic Yakovlev has a point—until you remember the extremely dire consequences of that official silence. Invisible radiation spread out over the unsuspecting population of Ukraine, and was soon detected in Sweden.

That was three days after the explosion, but in the Soviet Union, media were still only reporting that "An accident has occurred at Chernobyl nuclear-power station. One of the atomic reactors has been damaged." The usual "measures" had been taken "to eliminate the consequences," victims were being aided, and a government commission was named to deal with the problem.

Vladimir Gubarev, science editor for *Pravda*, tells *The Second Russian Revolution* that newspapers like his were forbidden to publish anything beyond the official statement.

After a train trip to Ukraine to see the panic and death caused by Chernobyl, Gubarev spoke truth to power—not in *Pravda's* news columns, but quite literally to two of the country's most powerful men, who summoned him to a meeting upon his return to Moscow:

It's twilight. The desk lamp is on. Gorbachev and Yakovlev are sitting there. I'm telling them about Chernobyl. I was furious. I'd seen so much incompetence. I'd seen so much stupidity. It was such a disgrace.

The two leaders send Gubarev off to write a brief for them by the next morning:

I think that report is the best thing I have written.

Gubarev picks up the report and reads from it: "The main reason for the panic in Kiev is the lack of information. Nothing about what had happened, not even on radiation in the city, not one Ukrainian leader has appeared on TV to explain."

Gorbachev didn't acknowledge Gubarev's criticisms publicly, but he began to make moves that repudiated the old policies of secrecy and censorship. Vitaly Korotich, an editor in Ukraine, had publicly labeled the Chernobyl coverup "criminal." Instead of being punished, he was rewarded with a new job in Moscow editing the national weekly magazine *Ogonyok*. Under him, it became one of the liveliest Gorbachev-era publications.

Ogonyok, like all Soviet media, was still serving the cause, but now the cause was reform, warmly embraced by Korotich and other liberal editors. Far from relinquishing control, though, the Politburo continued to debate what could, and could not, be said in the media, the arts, and elsewhere.

And here is where glasnost proved particularly helpful to the producers of *The Second Russian Revolution*. It had emboldened lower-level reformers—including journalists like Korotich, Gubarev, and Ivan Laptev, editor of *Izvestia*—who were happy to recount what they knew of behind-the-scenes

struggles. Those accounts could then be leveraged with higher-ups—we know this version of events, now tell us yours. The technique worked, perhaps because of glasnost (even hardliners could get caught up in the new, freer way of speaking); or because of the BBC's international reputation; or because of what Brian Lapping describes as Norma Percy's "absolute, overpowering will" when it comes to getting an interview. As Robert Hanks put it in a 2005 *Independent* article: "A lot of her [Norma's] interviewees say no to the first request—because they have a country to run, or because the issues being discussed are too sensitive, or because they don't know Percy and haven't yet realized that it's going to be simpler just to do what she asks."

Second look

I first watched *The Second Russian Revolution* on VHS tapes, sent by a friend in London who recorded them as they aired on BBC the summer of 1991. Then they sat untouched until last year, when, in a major media housecleaning, my husband and I culled our vast VHS holdings. *The Second Russian Revolution* was among the few I kept for conversion to DVD. I was curious to see if my memory had embellished its quality.

Far from it. I was struck immediately by the range of sources who spoke with BBC and the depth and thoughtfulness of each interview. The long sit-downs with Yakovlev, the liberal reformer, and his Politburo nemesis Ligachev, the embodiment of the old guard, provide the framework for many key moments. Ligachev stands proudly for the old ways—it's one thing to criticize Stalin, quite another to ridicule him, he says. Yakovlev describes deft maneuvers that sometimes, but not always, overcame hardliner opposition.

In the end, the two Politburo powerhouses represent the dueling world views that surrounded Gorbachev. Yakovlev describes the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe as an inevitability, not worth sending soldiers out of their barracks to fight over. For Ligachev, though, "It wasn't just the Berlin Wall collapsing, but our whole system."

Gorbachev himself did not speak with BBC for the original series; he did grant an interview after August

1991, when BBC returned to produce two more post-coup episodes on Gorbachev's revolution. The entire package was shown later that year by Discovery in the US, but with at least one crucial change: Instead of translating the hours of Russian into subtitles, as BBC did, Discovery used English voiceovers. What's lost in the Discovery version is important nuance; Ligachev's bombast is muted, Yeltsin's slyness is less obvious.

But it's impossible to mute another key element of *The Second Russian Revolution*: the high drama of so many debates at party and government meetings, which in the glasnost era were often televised live. Many of the most sensational moments came in May 1989, during that first session of the Congress of People's Deputies, the body created by Gorbachev when he got his Communist Party to approve competitive elections to a new legislature—a step designed to make the party more responsive to the people it had ruled by fiat for 70 years.

Though billed as a bold experiment in democracy, the Congress was still in the firm grip of the Communist Party, whose loyalists held most seats. Given the numbers, the new legislature could never be much more than a debating society.

But what debates! For two weeks, the Soviet Union was transfixed by daily dramas in the auditorium of that grand Palace of Congresses. Andrei Sakharov, the dissident conscience of the nation, addressed the entire country on day one—and later was denounced by numerous deputies for allegedly insulting the Soviet military. Newly elected deputies took the podium to decry historic and current human-rights abuses, to criticize Gorbachev and other party leaders, to demand radical changes—or to stop the reform process altogether.

Gorbachev had created the Congress, forcing it on party conservatives who resisted any democratic change. But by the end of its first session, it was clear that Gorbachev was no longer in charge. "He was like a coachman with a runaway cart," says the writer Ales Adamovich, a liberal member of the Congress, in his interview with *The Second Russian Revolution*. "It would career to the right, then to the left, then downhill. It could easily have crashed."

Another liberal, Anatoly Sobchak from Leningrad, says that during the Congress Gorbachev complained that while "radicals" from Moscow and Leningrad could easily promote bold ideas because they represented liberal, urban constituencies, "I must think of the whole of Russia and the other republics." Says Sobchak of Gorbachev's lament: "He was right."

I am struck by the sympathy of Sobchak's view, shared with BBC at a time when liberals were publicly excoriating Gorbachev, charging he had turned away from reform. By 1990, the liberals had a new patron saint: Boris Yeltsin, who was undergoing an extraordinary rehabilitation that further complicated Gorbachev's political life.

Just how pressured Gorbachev felt is made clear in an audio recording the BBC producers obtained. "Comrade Yeltsin jumps at every chance to denigrate me," Gorbachev complains, as he meets with politicians who in the spring of 1990 were about to decide whether to elevate Yeltsin to a new, powerful job as chairman of the Parliament of the Soviet Republic of Russia. A woman asks:

Mikhail Sergeyevich, what will you do if we elect Yeltsin as chairman of the Russian Federation?

Gorbachev responds:

I will give you a straight answer. At this critical time, if I were you, I would never risk it.

Like so much of what Gorbachev had to say by 1990, this advice was ignored.

Reverse glasnost

At the end of *Revolution*, the narrator asks whether Gorbachev can "finish what he began, or has he become a hostage of his own revolution?" That question aired just a month and a half before Gorbachev was put under house arrest by hardliners hoping to halt the reforms. When the coup attempt against him collapsed that August, the Soviet Union still existed, but it was a vastly different place, more open than Gorbachev's glasnost had ever intended.

Soviet TV aired *The Second Russian Revolution* that September. And when Norma Percy returned to Moscow the same month, to work on a post-coup

addendum to the project, officials all but lined up to be interviewed—even, eventually, Gorbachev.

A couple of decades later, the Lapping-Percy team returned to take on a new subject: *Putin, Russia and the West*. Some of the same Russia experts involved with the Gorbachev documentary worked on the Putin one, too. As before, they sought high-level interviews and candid responses. As before, they put together a smart, highly polished production that won acclaim.

But much of the insight in *Putin* comes from interviews with western officials, and from those Russian officials selected by the Kremlin to speak (Putin did not grant an interview). Percy describes the making of the Putin documentary as far more difficult, with access far more restricted than in the Gorbachev era.

"Russia has become a place where people are scared" to talk, she says. Percy describes the atmosphere in Putin's Russia as "reverse glasnost."

Nevertheless, Putin is said to have liked the film, and NTV, owned by Gazprom, the Kremlin-controlled natural gas monopoly, aired it last year just before Putin won election to a third presidential term.

"An NTV chap told us: 'He thinks it shows him as a strong leader,'" wrote Percy and Paul Mitchell, series director of *Putin, Russia and the West*. "What liberals saw as a revelation of Putin's brutal suppression of dissent, his supporters saw as the strongman standing up to western enemies or greedy oligarchs."

But Percy notes that NTV was careful to run the broadcast before the election, which Putin won handily despite months of opposition protests and allegations of election fraud.

Gone were the days of Gorbachev, when—at least temporarily—public opinion mattered, elections were at least "quasi-democratic," and the press could hold officials accountable. "Vladimir Putin still calls the shots," wrote Percy and Mitchell as Russians went to the polls last March. "And if all goes to his plan, by today he will no longer have to worry about public opinion." **CJR**

ANN COOPER is a professor at Columbia Journalism School. She was NPR's Moscow bureau chief from 1987 to 1991.

Hard lessons

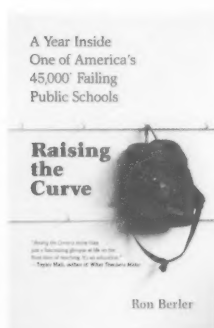
Finding hope in the effort to reform America's public schools

BY JULIA M. KLEIN

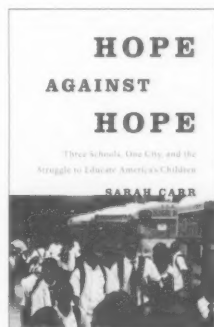
THE DESPERATE CONDITION OF MANY of America's urban schools is captured by an anecdote Ron Berler relates near the end of *Raising the Curve: A Year Inside One of America's 45,000 Failing Public Schools*. In the story, a novice teacher tours a "forbidding" inner-city school in Bridgeport, CT, with its principal. "Listen to me carefully," the principal says. "I'm offering you a job. I'm advising you not to take it."

The school, and district, on which Berler concentrates his reporting—Brookside Elementary, in Norwalk, CT—is distinctly less dreadful than Bridgeport. But the challenges faced by this Hispanic-majority institution—squeezed between federal and state mandates on the one hand and fierce local budget-cutting on the other—are almost as great. Here a well-meaning principal and his dedicated staff wage daily, unsung battles to keep students disadvantaged by poverty, ethnicity, and family dysfunction from falling ineradicably behind their more fortunate peers.

Similar issues confront the characters in Sarah Carr's *Hope Against Hope: Three Schools, One City, and the Struggle to Educate America's Children*. Carr, a veteran education reporter, bases herself in post-Katrina New Orleans, where almost every taxpayer-funded school is now a privately run charter. By both default and design, the ravaged city has become a cauldron of educational



Raising the Curve:
A Year Inside One of America's 45,000 Failing Public Schools
By Ron Berler
Berkeley Books
256 pages, \$25.95



Hope Against Hope:
Three Schools, One City, and the Struggle to Educate America's Children
By Sarah Carr
Bloomsbury Press
306 pages, \$20

experimentation—one plagued by a uniquely traumatized student population and grave financial shortfalls.

Carr spotlights three high schools, represented by a popular African-American principal with a tragic personal

story, a Harvard-educated rookie teacher recruited by Teach For America, and an African-American student who wants a better education than she's getting. Carr pulls back intermittently from these narratives to comment on the larger issues roiling the city's schools, and public education in general. At stake, she writes, is "how the push for racial equality should proceed, at a time when the end goal remains as elusive as ever."

Carr's ambitious model is the Pulitzer-winning *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (1985), in which author J. Anthony Lukas used contrasting families—Yankee, Irish, and black—as a lens through which to examine Boston's desegregation and busing crisis. Unlike Carr, Berler sticks largely to a single fifth-grade class. His focus is suggestive of Tracy Kidder's 1989 classic *Among Schoolchildren*, which followed a racially mixed fifth-grade classroom in Holyoke, MA, for an academic year.

There are tradeoffs in these two approaches: Carr gives us a somewhat broader view of reform alternatives; Berler offers a more sustained look at his characters. If neither book quite equals its illustrious model, both are nonetheless meticulously reported, competently written, and (using mostly real names) sometimes surprisingly intimate. Writing sympathetically about the players and critically about the settings in which they operate, the authors provide provocative snapshots of the current moment in American education.

BERLER INITIALLY ENTERED BROOKSIDE as a volunteer in the school's student-mentoring program. He raised his hand at the suggestion of his wife, Carol, Brookside's speech pathologist since 2001. Even while researching the book, Berler didn't just sit silently in the classroom, a great big fly on the wall. Instead, he tells us in the acknowledgements, he agreed to "serve as an unpaid teacher's aide...in return for the daily unfettered access I would need to research this book"—hardly a conventional journalistic arrangement.

But what Berler offers us, in lieu of coolheaded, clear-eyed journalistic remove, may in this case be better: an

intimacy enabled by his subjects' trust. He is notably frank in his portraits of two friends, Hydea and Marbella, in the estimable Mr. Morey's fifth-grade class. Both girls, from middle-class families, struggle in different ways. Hydea lacks self-confidence but wants to improve. Marbella, by contrast, is socially adept but a lackadaisical student, seemingly unworried by her lack of progress. "She just went through the motions," Mrs. Schaefer, Brookside's literacy specialist, says of Marbella. "Even when she seemed to get it, it seemed like it didn't really matter to her."

Yet both Marbella and Hydea are paragons compared to some of the boys in the class. (Berler admits to changing the names of four students and one teacher, though we're never told which.) Fernando, Chandler, Carlos—all are, to varying degrees, troublemakers. Berler follows Mr. Morey as he strategizes about turning the charismatic Chandler into a force for good. "You've got to step up," he tells the boy, and eventually Chandler does—suggesting that the right nudge at the right time can indeed be transformative.

What constant testing contributes to educational transformation is less clear. The frame of *Raising the Curve* is Brookside's preparation for the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), described as "the annual, state-mandated standardized test on reading, writing, and math skills for all third, fourth, and fifth graders that served as Connecticut's exam for No Child Left Behind (NCLB)."

For schools, the consequences of poor performance on this test can be dire, from lost federal funds to mass firings and state takeover. The really diabolical feature of No Child Left Behind, in Berler's telling, is that it is meant to be taken literally: Even as schools gradually improve, the targets they must reach—the percentage of students attaining "proficiency" in each subject—grow ever higher, topping out at an impossible 100 percent. Is it any wonder that Brookside should abandon the normal curriculum for weeks before the CMT in favor of nonstop test prep?

Most of Brookside's teachers work hard against tough odds; Mr. Morey starts the year comparing his class to "an out-of-shape hoops team that hadn't

Hope can be found in individuals, if not in the faltering education system.

practiced in months." But the task embraced by Mrs. Schaefer seems particularly Sisyphean. Pulling a few children out of class for small-group reading instruction, she gets results. But when, in quest of greater efficiency, she shifts her focus to teacher training, she has to stop most individual instruction, and her former students falter and regress. After Mrs. Schaefer retires, Brookside loses funding for a full-time literacy instructor, and comes perilously close to losing its library as well. The battles continue; the war, it seems, cannot be won.

CARR BEGINS *HOPE AGAINST HOPE* AT a community meeting dominated by two groups with clashing visions for New Orleans' majority-black district: technocratic reformers who want experts to run the schools and civil-rights activists who care more about tradition and community control. The technocrats are more accepting of the capitalistic status quo, and their vision "prioritizes collaboration with whites, and finding solutions that are acceptable to both races." By contrast, the activists, wanting blacks to set their own agenda, prioritize "political over economic capital."

These disputes play out in the rest of the book, but, Carr says, in less polarized ways. "In the schools," she writes, "the war over education no longer seems so stark or clearly defined. Edges blur, shades of gray abound, and simple solutions prove elusive."

Aidan Kelly, a young, idealistic Harvard grad recruited by Teach For America, teaches at Sci Academy, a data-obsessed, "aggressively routinized," open-enrollment school that touts its relatively high test scores. Fourteen-year-old Geraldlynn Stewart attends KIPP Renaissance High School, a place she associates with "preppy uniforms, crazy rules, and nights and weekends full of schoolwork." Both charter

schools emphasize long hours, regimentation, and college prep. But at both, the gap between the ideal and the actual is yawning, and classroom discipline seems forever to be breaking down.

By contrast, the grandmotherly Mary Laurie runs a different sort of charter. As principal of O. Perry Walker High School, Laurie pursues a more holistic, community-based approach. Thanks in large part to her efforts, the school has a health clinic, counselors and social workers, and numerous afterschool programs. (The school's marching band has appeared on the HBO series *Treme*.) But even Laurie's deep commitment, which Carr seems to admire more than the rule-bound charters, can't heal the wounds left by shattered homes and families—can't even prevent violence, it turns out, or keep students safe.

Overall, Carr, like Berler, paints a discouraging picture, often with considerable eloquence. In New Orleans high schools (as at Brookside), the relentless prepping for standardized exams—in this case, the ACT and various AP tests—distorts the curriculum. And the increasing federal stake in education, including President Obama's "Race to the Top" pro-charter school reforms, is hardly a panacea. New Orleans, like other cities with too many poor people, is a place where even teachers who want to teach and students who want to learn can't necessarily overcome the chaos, deprivation, and despair.

And yet, even now, there are victories; there is, as Carr's title avers, hope—in individuals if not in the faltering system.

Disdaining the lure of higher paying professions, Aidan Kelly works 80 or more hours a week, answering students' homework questions by phone well into the evenings.

"Don't be like me. Be a little better," Raquel, who cleans hotel rooms, tells her daughter Geraldlynn, who aspires to college and will probably make it.

And the inspiring Mary Laurie surely will keep fighting for her kids—until the last beleaguered administrator turns off the last light. **CJR**

JULIA M. KLEIN, a CJR contributing editor, covered education as a staff writer for The Philadelphia Inquirer.

IN PRAISE OF THE SCRIBBLING PESTS

The reporters, those hungry scribes
Who pry beneath the OFFICIAL STATEMENT
Who press past the press release
Who won't take "NO" for an
answer or comment
Who FACT-CHECK the final word

To them, UNANSWERED CALLS
are catnip
SPIN is an ugly affront

They draw the hidden conclusion
as they write the bigger picture

They work for THE NEWS
but answer to the TRUTH

The Dallas Morning News

dallasnews.com

Holy mess

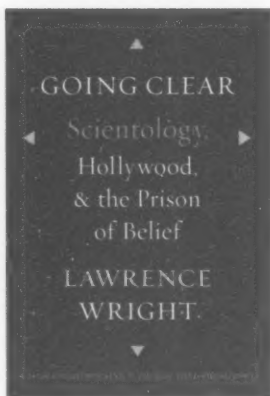
Lawrence Wright unpacks the mysteries of Scientology

BY LINDSAY BEYERSTEIN

IN MID-JANUARY, *THE ATLANTIC*, which famously pledged in 1857 to be "the organ of no party or clique," was caught renting its good name to the Church of Scientology. The magazine ran an online advertorial for the church, labeled as "Sponsor Content" but formatted to look like an *Atlantic* story. "David Miscavige Leads Scientology to Milestone Year," it boasted, claiming that Scientology is expanding at "a growth rate 20 times that of a decade ago."

The advertorial seemed timed to preempt the release of Lawrence Wright's new book, *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief*, which hit bookstores later that week. The church has a long history of aggressive PR campaigns against journalistic critics. In 1991, for instance, Scientology spent \$3 million to run several weeks of ads attacking Richard Behar and *Time* magazine for Behar's scathing exposé, "Scientology: The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power." (Among other things, the ads accused *Time* of being soft on Hitler.) But as Wright explains in his book, ad campaigns are downright benign compared to some of the tactics, legal and extra-legal, that Scientology has used in its attempts to silence journalists and other critics over the years.

In *Going Clear*, Wright, who won a Pulitzer Prize for an earlier book on Al Qaeda, sets out to explain why people



Going Clear:
Scientology, Hollywood,
& the Prison of Belief

By Lawrence Wright
Alfred A. Knopf
430 pages, \$28.95

believe in Scientology. His research is rooted in documents provided by the church itself, interviews with senior Scientologists who defected from the church, court records, and the voluminous body of investigative reporting that has grown up around the church over the years. But in order to understand what people get out of Scientology today, it's important to understand what its founder got out of it.

Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, was a prolific pulp science-fiction writer who went on to make a fortune with the secular self-help book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, before turning his theories into a full-blown religion in 1954. Hubbard promised his followers that "going clear," i.e., releasing traumatic memories stored in their bodies through "auditing"—a form of guided talk-therapy—would give them perfect memory, perfect eyesight, and other physical and psychological benefits.

It's easy to imagine a jaded pulp writer cynically repackaging his sci-fi potboilers as spiritual doctrine to make a buck. However, Wright thinks that Hubbard believed at least some of his own teachings. From the beginning, Hubbard was obsessed with trying to solve his own myriad psychological problems. Even after Scientology became a thriving sect, he continued to churn out new doctrine at an astonishing rate. Its ever-evolving, increasingly baroque teachings, according to Wright, reflect Hubbard's attempt to control his own frenetic mind. He failed to rein in his paranoia, but he succeeded in monetizing the effort.

Today, Wright explains, there are three tracks within Scientology, with people on each track getting something different out of the church. Wright's star case study is the screenwriter Paul Haggis, who spent 34 years and hundreds of thousands of dollars as a celebrity Scientologist before breaking with the church after its reported opposition to gay marriage caused him to investigate various criticisms of Scientology. Celebrities like Haggis, Tom Cruise, and John Travolta, who represent one track, are aggressively recruited and enjoy privileged status within the church.

Another track, the Sea Organization, is an elite corps of Scientology clergy who sign billion-year contracts to serve the church. Its members are typically recruited from devout Scientology families, often while still in their teens. They are often underpaid and ruthlessly punished when they fall out of favor with their superiors. Finally, there are the rank-and-file or public Scientologists, ordinary people who take Scientology courses and deduct part of their

auditing fees on their income taxes. The book succeeds in explaining why the elites of Scientology join, and what keeps some of them in abusive conditions after they've joined, but it has less to say about what rank-and-file Scientologists get out of their religion.

And Scientology is a religion, Wright argues. Almost any pathological characteristic you can find in Scientology has a counterpart in some major world religion, current or historical. Though some Scientology critics will surely be offended by Wright's constant use of the word "church," the term seems apt. History shows that there's nothing intrinsically benign about churches or religions. Scientology holds no monopoly on corruption, or secrecy, or avarice.

But as far as I can tell, Scientology is the first religion to make litigation a sacrament. Hubbard wrote that lawsuits were important tools for bankrupting and demoralizing enemies of the church. He taught that critics were "fair game," meaning that the faithful had a spiritual duty to ruin them by any means necessary. Though Hubbard eventually retired the term "fair game," the underlying policy never changed.

When Paulette Cooper revealed Hubbard's bogus educational credentials and the church's vindictive treatment of defectors in her 1971 book *The Scandal of Scientology*, Cooper reported that her phones were tapped; a delivery man attempted to shoot and strangle her cousin, likely mistaking her for the author; Scientology officials accused her of sending a bomb threat to the church. Cooper was indicted on that trumped-up charge.

And when Richard Behar of *Time* called Scientology a "cult of greed," he said that the church sent private investigators to illegally obtain his phone and credit records, and sued him all the way to the US Supreme Court. Scientology lost, but not before costing *Time* more in defense costs than any other case in the magazine's history up to that point.

Scientology has issued an official rebuttal to *Going Clear*, which claims to document some 200 errors in the book. No perceived oversight is too small to merit comment. Scientology excoriates Wright for mischaracterizing the volcanic island of Madeira as an atoll. Atolls

Scientology may be the first religion to make litigation a sacrament.

are ring-shaped and made of coral, volcanic islands are made of rock. Point: Scientology.

With its rebuttal, Scientology seems to be laying groundwork to argue that Wright did not follow standard journalistic practices in his investigation. (As the church writes: "These represent errors, some large and others small, but all of them a result of reporting methods that lacked factual accuracy, avoided the Church and relied on individuals who display their disdain for their former religion and could hardly be qualified as reliable or 'expert'.")

But what's amazing is how much of Wright's account goes unchallenged in Scientology's rebuttal. Wright quotes a handwritten memoir of Hubbard's from the late 1940s in which Hubbard confesses to being a chronic liar, a malingerer, a military shirker, and a conflicted masturbator. Wright explains that when the document first came to light in 1984, the church's lawyers initially acknowledged Hubbard's authorship but claimed the document shouldn't be taken seriously because it was just a form of "self-therapy." Later on, Wright says, the church claimed without evidence that the document was a forgery. This time, church leaders just let it pass without comment.

The author weaves the normally hidden fact-checking process into the action of the book, dramatizing a showdown between *The New Yorker's* factchecking team and senior Scientology officials. Hubbard claimed that he used Dianetics to heal himself of wounds he suffered in combat during World War II. In the factchecking meeting, a Scientology official named Tommy Davis vehemently defends the story, saying that if Hubbard was never wounded and never healed himself, then Dianetics—and thus all of Scientology—would be based on a lie. Wright

presents overwhelming evidence that Hubbard was neither wounded in battle nor healed of blindness after the war; he argues convincingly that the documents Scientology cites to "prove" Hubbard's war wounds are clumsy forgeries. Point: Wright.

Davis was the public face of Scientology and the head of the church's Celebrity Centre International in Los Angeles—a sort of social club for celebrity members which also runs Scientology classes and "auditing" sessions—until he mysteriously disappeared over a year ago. His responsibilities involved the care and feeding of Tom Cruise, the world's most prominent Scientologist. The church went to extremes to please Cruise—hand-building luxurious vehicles for him, even scouting out a Scientology-approved girlfriend. This special treatment puts Cruise and other celebrity Scientologists in a kind of bubble, shielding them from the seamier truths of their oft-vindictive faith. "I was in a cult for 34 years," Paul Haggis told Wright after his defection. "Everyone else could see it. I don't know why I couldn't."

Since its founding in 1954, Scientology has weathered countless scandals, any one of which might have been enough to sink the nascent religion. It's clear that the church has survived in part by diligently defending its image and attacking its critics. Thanks to books like *Going Clear*, and to increased public scrutiny, that façade is starting to crack.

The *Atlantic* advertorial was removed less than 12 hours after it went online, amid merciless mockery on social media. The magazine apologized—not for partnering with Scientology per se, but rather for not considering the implications of partnering with Scientology. At the end of January, the magazine issued revised guidelines for sponsor content and advertising, stipulating that "*The Atlantic* will refuse publication of such content that, in its own judgment, would undermine the intellectual integrity, authority, and character of our enterprise." Point: journalism. **CJR**

LINDSAY BEYERSTEIN is a staff writer at *In These Times* and the lead writer at the Sidney Hillman Foundation.

Fast women

Phileas Fogg had nothing on pioneering female journalists
Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland

BY DANIEL LUZER

AH, STUNT JOURNALISM. WHERE would America's airport bookstores be without it? Let's see if I can read an entire encyclopedia in a year. What's it like to try to live on a minimum-wage job? How about if I just eat at McDonald's for a month?

But today's stunt reporters have nothing on their yellow-journalism predecessors. Around the turn of the 20th century, stunts commanded banner headlines and drove massive circulation increases; stunt reporters were treated like celebrities; and stunt stories could have real social significance. The queen of this was Nellie Bly, celebrated for her 1887 exploration of the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island, in which she pretended to be insane in order to expose how the county's asylums operated. Her story prompted a grand jury investigation and sweeping changes at the asylum.

Two years later, Bly was part of another mad stunt, in which two American women raced to circumnavigate the globe. Bly, from Joseph Pulitzer's *World*, and Elizabeth Bisland, from *The Cosmopolitan* magazine, both left New York on November 14, 1889, trying to outdo Phileas Fogg, the hero of Jules Verne's 1873 science fiction novel, *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Clutching their petticoats to keep dry, Bisland and Bly embarked on one of the journalist's greatest adventures, the foreign



Eighty Days:
Nellie Bly and Elizabeth
Bisland's History-Making
Race Around the World
By Matthew Goodman
Ballantine Books
480 pages, \$28

reporting trip—at a time when most women weren't even allowed to cover City Hall.

In *Eighty Days: Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland's History-Making Race Around the World*, Matthew Goodman retraces the journey from both women's perspectives. He follows Bly and Bisland across the continents, recounting their experiences, their reporting, its contemporary reception, and what the two trips might have meant in the long run. Goodman, the author of two other books and the recipient of a Yaddo

fellowship, uses their journeys to illuminate several larger themes: the introduction of world tourism, the progress of journalism, the closing of the American frontier, and the slow advance of women's suffrage.

In the late 19th century, America was curiously obsessed with women and their virtue and "moral superiority." New York Senator Roscoe Conkling, who surely knew a great deal about the sins to which men were tempted, lathered his speeches with references to "pure, enlightened, and progressive womanhood." Like Rome with its Vestal Virgins, the rhetoric of the time often treated women as pure beings defending the nation against wickedness though the power of their virtue alone.

This sentimentalizing served to counteract the growing clamor for female suffrage and equal rights. The Reverend John Buckley, for example, was so convinced of women's moral rectitude that that he "implored male voters to respect female moral superiority by making sure that it wouldn't be soiled and degraded by putting a bit of paper in a ballot box," wrote Thomas Beer in *The Mauve Decade*, his cultural history of the 1890s. It's reasonable to surmise that many women were sick and tired of all of this lip service to their "moral superiority" and eager to go out and prove to the world their actual capabilities.

Nellie Bly was on the front lines of this battle. A scrappy reporter from Pennsylvania coal country, Bly's work at *The World* seemed to involve a new adventure every week. She'd get a job in a factory, attempt to indirectly bribe members of the New York State Legislature, try to buy a baby, and so on.

Elizabeth Bisland was a different sort of journalist. Bisland's publication, *The Cosmopolitan*, was one of America's early magazines of ideas (not until later, under new owners, did it become the "8 Ways to Indulge Your Naughty Side" *Cosmopolitan* we know today). Bisland wrote and edited the magazine's books section. She was also "the most beautiful woman in metropolitan journalism," according to an 1888 article in *The Journalist*.

This was not a particularly crowded field. In 1880, about 2 percent of American journalists, or 288 of them, were

women. These reporters were largely consigned to writing stories about society, a dreadful job path one woman characterized as "one long drawn-out five o'clock tea of somebody else." Talented journalists like Bly and Bisland were desperate to escape this career prison, which is perhaps how this contest came about.

The round-the-world trip was Bly's idea. By comparing various timetables for travel, she deduced she could do the whole journey in less than 80 days. (She likely reasoned that circumnavigating the globe was one of the few ways she could top the madhouse story.) *The World* supposed—correctly, it turned out—that such a trick could help increase circulation. She set out with much fanfare on the morning of November 14, 1889.

The publisher of *The Cosmopolitan*, John Brisben Walker, first read of Bly's journey in *The World* on the day she left. He quickly summoned Bisland. Walker, an eccentric millionaire from Denver who had already made and lost a fortune in iron manufacturing, served in the Chinese army, and earned a PhD from Georgetown before trying his hand at journalism, told his literary editor that she would go around the world, too.

The shy, bookish Bisland thought Walker was joking. She couldn't go, she protested, she had people coming over for tea the next day. Walker was not joking. Bisland left New York that evening, eight hours behind Bly.

Eighty Days goes back and forth between the two journeys, taking the reader step by step around the world. Bly went east, Bisland west. They crossed paths in the South China Sea around Christmas, 1889. But despite Goodman's title, it wasn't really a race—primarily because *The World* barely acknowledged Bisland's travels. Walker bet Pulitzer \$1,000 that Bly couldn't complete the journey first, but *The World* wouldn't take a wager. Bly didn't find out until she reached Hong Kong that someone else was taking a journey around the world, too.

Along the way, the reader is treated to stories of the hijinks the women endure in the course of their travels. On one boat, Bly is romanced by an impoverished English aristocrat who thinks, for

Bly acquires a fez-wearing monkey who terrorizes her companions.

some reason, that the journalist was an heiress to a great fortune. She acquires a fez-wearing monkey somewhere in Asia, who then proceeds to terrorize Bly's traveling companions for the rest of her trip. At one point in her journey Bisland, having been warned of the dangers of tigers in Singapore, trembles with fright in her hotel room, sure that the rustling she hears as she lies in bed is a tiger preparing to devour her. Only when she lights a match and discovers that her visitor is actually a very large rat can she relax. "This is almost as bad as the tiger," she admits, "but as I have no intention of attacking this terrible beast and my notice appears to bore him, I blow out the candle and go to sleep."

But despite the tigers, monkeys, and improvident suitors, *The World's* editors occasionally had "trouble finding enough news to keep the public interested in the trip," Goodman writes. This is a problem Goodman seems to face as well. The book often feels padded, and the reader can sense him straining to tease meaning and broader social significance out of a story that really could be just a travelogue. It also seems the author might be retroactively making more of Bisland than her achievements actually warrant—as if, 100 years from now, some enterprising writer produced a story about the rivalry between Steve Jobs and Steve the IT consultant who works in your office (well, they're both guys who are into technology and started their own companies...).

At times, Goodman is too quick to connect the Bly/Bisland race with the struggle against gender disparities in late Victorian America. Among the women who worked for newspapers, Goodman asserts that "it must have been gratifying to see the names of two female reporters appear daily on the front page of newspapers, on the editorial pages, even on the sports

pages—anywhere but the style pages." Well, *perhaps* it was gratifying. Possibly these women were also resentful. Or maybe they weren't really noticing at all. Who knows how they saw this contest?

But if we don't really know how America's female journalists thought about these journeys, the country at large eagerly awaited news of the writers' return—well, Bly's return, anyway. When she arrived on January 25, 1890—four days before Bisland made it home—she was received "with the sort of fanfare usually reserved for a conquering hero; her race around the world was already being turned from a personal to a national triumph." *The World*, which characterized the journey as "a tribute to American pluck, American womanhood, and American perseverance," even sponsored a contest for readers to guess the exact time the reporter would step off the train. (The winner, F.W. Stevens of 193 Second Avenue, predicted that Bly would return 72 days, 6 hours, 11 minutes and 14 2/5 seconds after she had departed. He won an all-expenses-paid trip to Europe—for one.)

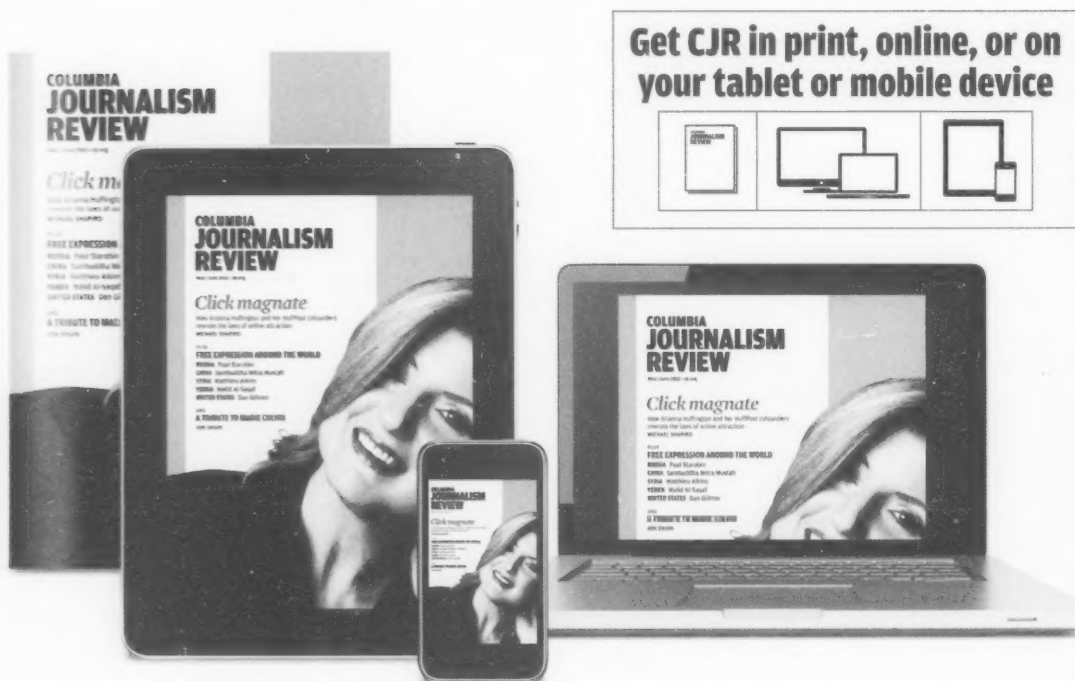
Bly's glory was short-lived. After a stint on the lecture circuit, she had continuous fights with editors and moved with her mother to a farmhouse in the country to escape publicity and what Goodman calls "unpleasant talk." Though she returned to journalism later in life, she was too famous to do the undercover investigative reporting at which she really excelled.

Bisland, in contrast, went to London to mingle in British high society. She wrote a series of articles for *The Cosmopolitan* on her journey, subsequently published as a book, *In Seven Stages: A Flying Trip Around The World*. She married a wealthy attorney who later became a utilities tycoon. Bisland's 1929 *New York Times* obituary ("Mrs. E. B. Wetmore, Author, Dies in South") failed to even mention the journey.

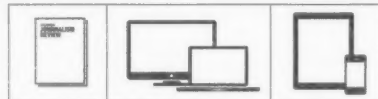
As for the record, Bly did hold the position of the fastest person in the world, very briefly. Four months later, on May 24, 1890, George Francis Train completed an around-the-world trip in 67 days. **CJR**

DANIEL LUZER is the Web editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

BY JAMES BOYLAN

After Visiting Friends: A Son's Story

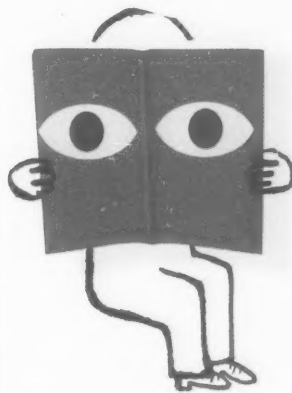
By Michael Hainey
Scribner
306 pages, \$26

ROBERT C. HAINEY WAS assistant copy desk chief (night slot man) at the *Chicago Sun-Times* when he died, suddenly, in 1970—"while visiting friends," said the *Chicago Daily News*; after he "had just left the home of a friend," said *Chicago Today*, where his brother, Richard, was executive editor. His own newspaper merely wrote that he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

His son Michael, six years old when his father died, read the obituaries years later and found them puzzling. In 2003, he decided to investigate—why the obituaries were inconsistent, why he died miles from the newspaper office and far from home.

This is no mere procedural, and Hainey tells the story with persistence and sympathy. He describes the Hainey brothers' migration from their hometown in Nebraska, their careers on Chicago newspapers, his father's marriage to a woman who worked at the *Chicago Tribune*. Most important, he tracks down his father's old colleagues, scattered about the country. He gets an education in the folkways of Chicago journalism, but most don't want to tell him much. Indeed, the story does not open up until a kindly nurse with access to old emergency-room records sends him a vital clue.

What he finds cannot



be a total surprise—a sad *après-shift* romance with a 24-year-old colleague, to which death brought a sudden end. Michael Hainey's uncle, it turned out, supplied a cover story to the police and newspapers. The young woman soon left Chicago for San Francisco and resumed her newspaper career. She never married, and died alone before Michael Hainey could meet her.

The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and Their Enduring Power

By Victor S. Navasky
Alfred A. Knopf
256 pages, \$27.95

THE ART OF CONTROVERSY makes clear that political cartoons—the best of them, at least—are serious business. They sometimes challenge the boundaries of the guarantees of free speech. They often violate personal, political, or aesthetic standards. They are likely to infuriate their targets.

In an introductory essay, the author (and *CJR*'s chairman) wonders whether such effects owe primarily to content, to the power of the images, or to what he calls

"neuroscience," a trigger within the viewer. But the real meat is his gallery of examples and discussions of the work of some 30 artists, from William Hogarth to the present. More than a few he has known personally as the editor of the late magazine of satire, *Monocle*, or later as editor of

The Nation—Edward Sorel and Robert Grossman among them—and the book is salted with recollections of working with them.

One work, by the caricaturist David Levine, appears still to trouble Navasky, although it was published nearly 30 years ago: the drawing of Henry Kissinger in the missionary position atop a female world. Twenty-six members of *The Nation* staff opposed its publication as sexist. Navasky published it, and still reflects today about whether he might have underestimated its power. But, as a free-speech absolutist, he says, he would publish it again.

Tupelo Man: The Life and Times of George McLean, a Most Peculiar Newspaper Publisher

By Robert Blad
University Press of Mississippi
308 pages, \$40

GEORGE MCLEAN (1904–1983) was an exemplar of what is now a rare breed: the small-town editor who is also an important civic leader. He deserves a biography, and now has one, an intensely detailed portrait by his son-in-law.

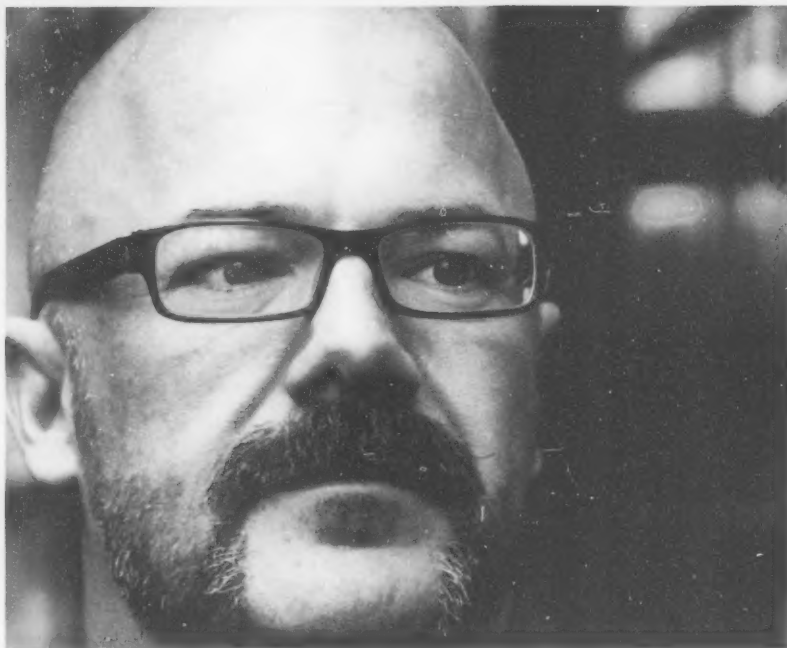
The somewhat spoiled son

of a Mississippi judge, McLean lived an aimless youth until he encountered what was known as the "Social Gospel," a progressive Christian doctrine associated with political activism. His pro-labor activities got him fired from a teaching job in Memphis. Casting about, he bought a bankrupt newspaper in Mississippi, the *Tupelo Daily Journal*, in 1934, and that was to be his life.

Always impatient and short-fused, he pushed the newspaper to profitability, but that was not enough. He was determined to develop Tupelo and the surrounding agricultural region. He created or encouraged innumerable community efforts, ultimately channeling more than a million dollars into an early reading program for the region's schools. At first slow to respond to *Brown v. Board*, his newspaper later played a key role in supporting and preserving an integrated public school system in Tupelo.

He married the girl next door, who put up with him for decades (she left him once, briefly) and succeeded him as publisher after his death. Robert Blad, a journalism professor, writes of McLean, his family, and his colleagues with affection and candor, if occasionally with excessive detail. But who can blame him? **CJR**

JAMES BOYLAN is the founding editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review* and professor emeritus of journalism and history at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst.



EXIT INTERVIEW

No more sugar daddies

ANDREW SULLIVAN'S DECISION IN JANUARY TO LEAVE THE DAILY BEAST AND TURN his popular blog, *The Dish*, into an independent site that relies on reader payments of \$19.99 a year (or more, if they choose; no ads, at least for now), touched off a lively discussion among media obsessives. Will this experiment in free-market journalism work, and no matter the outcome, what does it say about the future of the trade? Sullivan, in many ways, is sui generis. He was one of the first mainstream journalists to start blogging, back in 2000, and he has built a large and loyal following—a real community of people who share his interests (everything from politics to poetry), and his take on those interests. The question is whether that's enough to support a business that currently employs seven people. As Sullivan put it, "We have almost no precedents for where we want to go." *CJR* caught up with Sullivan via email in mid-January.

You reached \$400,000 in the first week. How long till you raise the next \$400,000 (or if you've already reached it, how long did it take)? It slowed down after an initial rush for pre-subscriptions. We won't know the final number until we've had a few weeks with the meter installed. Right now, people are paying in advance.

What kind of revenue do you need to break even? We made a conservative estimate of around \$900,000 for all expenses for seven staffers, design, tech, legal expenses, health insurance, etc.

Do you have a personal traffic goal? What were your traffic numbers at Daily Beast? In other words, what will success look like? Not really. We're moving away from measuring ourselves by pageviews or unique visitors, and toward maximizing reader enjoyment. But we have had an average of around 1.3 million unique visitors a month in the last few months, and around 10 million pageviews. In October,

'Any journalists not open to radical change are in danger... The status quo was more treacherous than this gamble.'

we got over 18 million pageviews—but that was election-related, obviously.

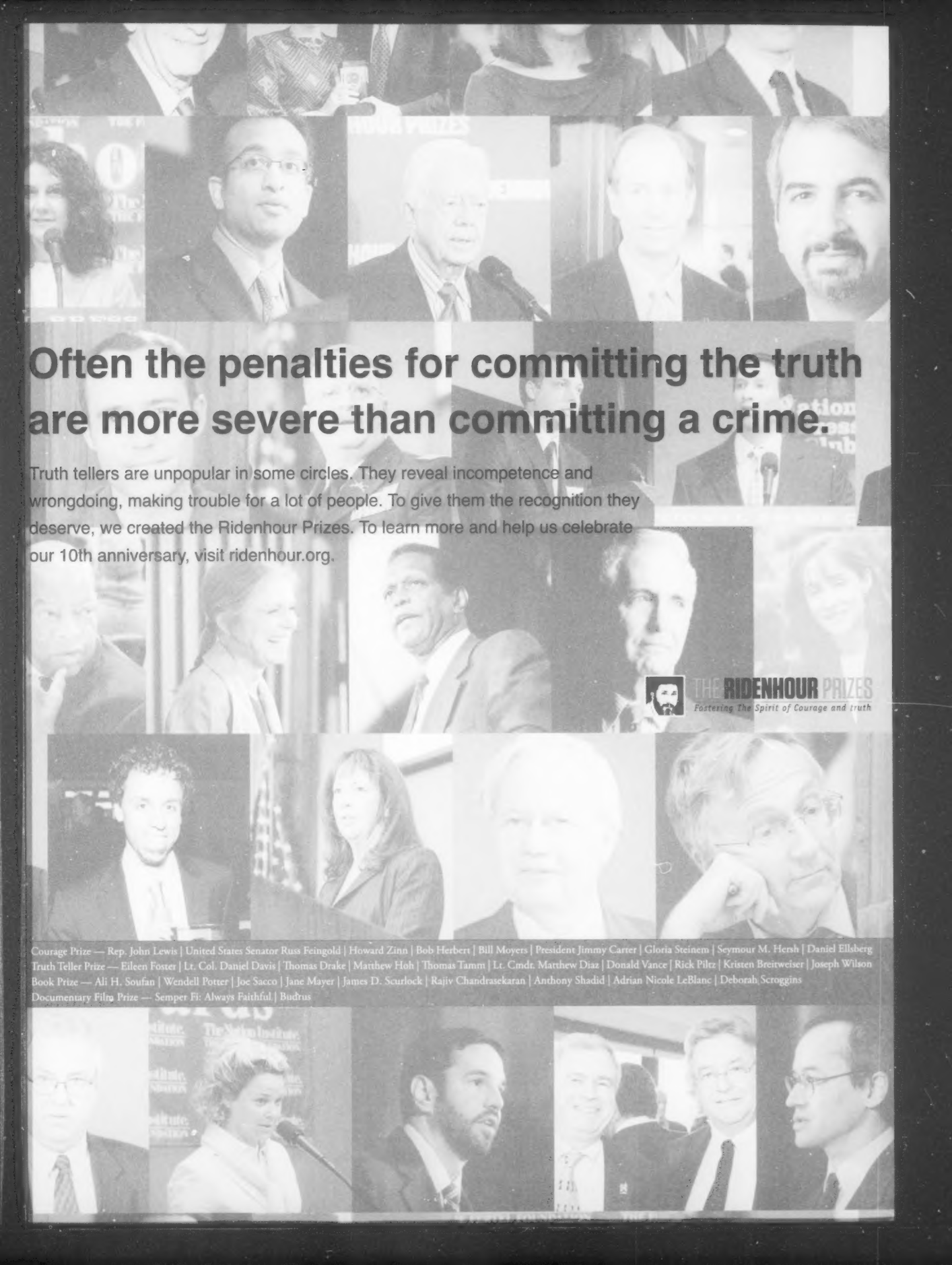
Will we see more original analysis and less curation? We will continue to do both, which is our specialty. But we will probably focus the meter on the original content.

How many posts do you have a day, and how do you decide when to weigh in and what to ignore? We typically have roughly 40 to 50 posts a day, or around 240 a week. I just write about what interests/angers/amuses/frustrates me. And my team does its best to find things online that will do all of that.

Will guest bloggers now be paid? Nope. We don't really have guest bloggers anymore, because we now have a staff that can carry *The Dish* when I'm on vacation or sick, like now.

Will any current features (e.g., the Ask Andrew Anything videos) become exclusive subscriber content? No. There will be no premium service with extra goodies. We are offering *The Dish* as it is for \$19.99 minimum, although a full half of our readers choose to pay more. How much further we can go depends on our budget for the year. Our immediate goal is to do this and be able to pay the rent. That's our own rent. We won't have an office.

What advice do you have for other bloggers who are thinking about going indie? Go for it. Any journalists not open to radical change right now are in danger. We realized the status quo was more treacherous than this gamble. And if we fail, we will have at least tried. We hope we succeed—largely because it might create a path for more bottom-up journalism, since the top-down version is on life support. **CJR**



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